dissent

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CHINA

CRAIG CALHOUN

Beijing Spring: An Eyewitness Account

BENJAMIN I. SCHWARTZ

On the New Turn in China

EUROPE IN TRANSITION

ALEC NOVE

The Problems of Perestroika

MITCHELL COHEN

Hungary: A Kind of Revolution

BOGDAN DENITCH

New Political Possibilities

DAVID BROMWICH

The Future of Tradition

Notes on the Crisis of the Humanities

Black America: Views from Within

Social, Political & Cultural Essays by Martin Kilson, Clement Cottingham, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Norman Hill, Orlando Patterson, Loïc J.D. Wacquant, Jerry Watts

ROBERT HEILBRONER

Michael Harrington's New Book

IRVING HOWE

A Word of Farewell

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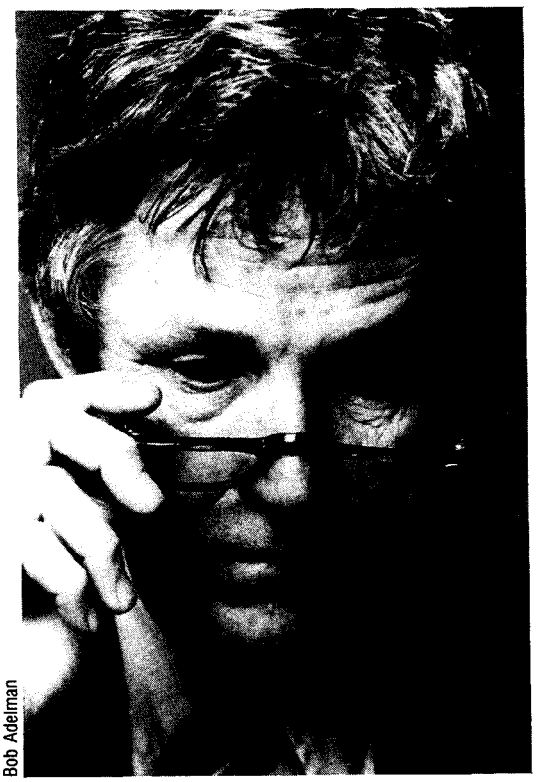
A Word of Farewell

MICHAEL HARRINGTON
1928–1989



Bob Adelman

He was our voice, our hope, our pride.

When Mike Harrington rose to speak, in that piercing alto of his, we all felt that the familiar language of socialism took on the complexion of youth, the freshness of truth. For a moment, it seemed as if all the shame and defeats of our century were erased, and the soaring hope of early socialism rang clear. Not that Mike didn't live, every minute of his days, with a full consciousness of how terrible this century had been; that consciousness bore down upon his every opinion and decision; it kept prodding him into revisions of thought and perspective. Still, he had the extraordinary capacity—it almost seemed a gift of nature—to lift the concerns of daily realism into a transcendent realm, the optimism of a man who has blinked nothing, yet, as a tempered democrat, lives by his margin of hope.

When Mike became the leader of what remained of the American socialist movement, now no longer pretending to be a party but frankly describing itself as an association of like-minded thinkers and activists, he inherited a crisis of thought which, we all knew, would last through and beyond our lifetimes. We often talked about this, musing over the turns of fate that lift some to the crest and drop others to the ebb of history.

Mike had to carry a double burden. He had to hold together a small group of comrades and he had to work on his own intellectually, trying to reassemble some elements of the socialist tradition. What remained usable, what did not?

One of the most remarkable aspects of Mike's career was his ability to live, no doubt with considerable tension, in accord with both needs. He could give close attention to daily organizational problems, listening to collaborators involved in political actuality, while at the same time maintaining a deep and active concern with political theory. Being the leader of a small and vulnerable movement is not an enviable role. You have to raise money, you have to provide "answers" even if you don't always have them, you have to solace comrades, you have to look for political openings. Mike became the first major socialist figure in America—even more than Norman Thomas—who made himself, through tireless work and intense study, an expert in social policy. The things we talked about in a general sort of way, Mike knew in precise detail.

For me, it was a pleasure to watch—especially

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after our earlier years of formulas and rhetoric—how Mike gave the socialist argument a foundation of authority and knowledge. And where, I used to wonder, where did he get the time? Between all those speeches and meetings? And how was it that in all the thirty-five years of *Dissent,* whenever we would ask Mike for an article, he always came through?

An even greater pleasure was to watch Mike's growth, his quiet but systematic process of self-education. When I first met Mike after the Second World War, he was a remarkably bright and articulate youngster, with a ready pen and a quick tongue. He had—younger friends may find this hard to believe—a streak of bohemianism: it was very charming, very winning. He liked to hang out in a bar in the West Village, drinking and talking with friends. His socialism was never ascetic or puritanical: it was good-spirited, buoyant, the belief of a man who enjoyed things in life, good food, tennis, conversation, all the things that make this earth bearable. But as he took on greater responsibilities, Mike imposed on himself a severity of self-discipline that was amazing, sometimes even a little troubling. He read the socialist classics systematically, even struggling with that impossible language, German. He knew the work of recent European leftist writers. He reached out beyond the left, to study and to learn from those who did not always agree with us—for he knew that no one has a monopoly of truth. Unburdened by office or power, Mike was free to devote himself to thought, and his mind roamed eagerly, happily.

Didn't he also pay a certain price for this remarkable self-discipline? I think so, and I know from conversations that he thought so too. Something of his youthful easygoing quality faded. In the books he wrote during his fifties, there was packed information and acute thought, but a certain slackening of style, at least by comparison to his earliest work and, it's a great pleasure to add, by comparison to his very latest work, in which he seemed miraculously, during the days he was battling his cancer, to recover his earlier elegance of language.

Mike was at his best as a speaker. He used to make himself a rudimentary outline, with a few subheads, and then out would roll those formed and pithy sentences, those structured paragraphs, those skeins of argument, those climaxes of reasoned passion. I suppose that, like many of the people reading these lines, I heard Mike speak at least a hundred times, maybe more; but I never tired, even when I could guess what would follow: the three points, the slightly ironic turn, the mildly yet really good-natured polemical twist, the ringing call to hope. I never tired because I knew that this was a deeply serious and thoughtful man, but still more, a really good man in whom humane values and fellow-feeling for all who suffered were vibrantly alive.

Some of us would sometimes say to Mike, "Why do you accept speaking engagements that can bring little political or intellectual or even personal gain? Why don't you pace yourself a little?" He would smile, he knew that in some sense we were "right," yet he felt also that we were "wrong." For who could say which seeds would sprout? Who could say in these difficult years which speech was urgent and which was not?

At times, I think, his gentleness seemed almost a flaw. He found it hard to criticize or correct his comrades. He wasn't the kind of leader who imposed his will. He tended to do many things himself rather than inflict them on others. He lacked—and this was one reason I loved him so much—the "hardness" of the political leader.

Let me end with a personal word, since others will surely want to add their voices to this memorial: In the forty years that Mike and I were close political collaborators, we rarely exchanged a "personal" word. Perhaps that was a fault of our milieu, of our moment, of our gender. Yet I always felt that our relationship was intensely personal, intimate, and close beyond words. When we disagreed once in a while, as we did in *Dissent* about tactical responses to the Jesse Jackson movement, we each spoke our minds and remained the easiest and closest of friends. I had the honor to read the chapters of his last book, as they kept pouring out with miraculous smoothness during the years of his fatal illness. I felt that he was experiencing, even during his sufferings, a triumphant revival of powers, in fact, a mastery of thought and speech he had never before reached. My only important criticism was to suggest that he was trying to pack too much into one book. Save something for the next one, I said to him. He would smile . . . yes, the next one. . . . Stephanie, his wife and staunch companion, told me that in the hospital he kept thinking about the next one.

As we remember him and pledge ourselves to continue in his path, I think it important to know that even at the very end Mike wanted desperately to live. He did not yield to death. He wanted to live because he still had work to do on this earth, because he still had words to speak and thoughts to put on paper. He wanted to live because he enjoyed life, he believed in life.

Farewell. Our voice, our hope, our pride.

—Irving Howe □

In our next issue, there will be other memories of and tributes to Michael Harrington.—EDS.

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dissent

Fall 1989

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Irving Howe

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

I want to mention very briefly—not discuss, not analyze—a few matters that we will be returning to in future issues of *Dissent*. They are central to our moment.

A few facts, perhaps known but worth repeating:

- Nearly one out of every four residents in New York lives on an income below the poverty line, which in 1987 was set by the federal government at $11,611 for a family of four. In 1988, 23.2 percent of the New York City population lived below the poverty line.

- A study by the National League of Cities discloses that poverty in America's cities has grown more concentrated and persistent over the last two decades. The proportion of the poor living in metropolitan areas rose from 62 to 70 percent in 1985—an increase of 7.6 million people.

- In the Times Square subway station, reports the *New York Times* (March 10, 1989), a rush-hour crowd kept stepping across a sleeping man who lay "stark naked." One woman with a sense of decorum "paused to cover his buttocks with a Saks Fifth Avenue shopping bag."

- The rate of killings due to "drug wars" has risen astonishingly in Washington, D.C. Over 300 people, mostly blacks, were shot last year, within walking distance of the White House presided over by a gentleman who wishes a "kinder and gentler" America.

- William J. Bennett, yesterday the education boss, has been appointed "drug czar." Little if any additional funding will be provided the czar, who will have to get by on eloquence.

Everyone with eyes to see is coming to recognize that beneath the surface of affluence and the ideology of the "free market," there is taking place in this country a steady, grinding process of social decay. Drugs, violence, poverty, gangs, homelessness, shootouts are but a few of the symptoms. Malaise, disintegration, pathology, "underclass": these are some of the key words. The reality is a terrible dehumanization, the worst we have known in fifty years, and only Kojak seems able to cope with it. And only on television reruns.

Is there a single solution to this complex of troubles? Probably not. Could there be a complex of programs that might alleviate this social disaster? Unquestionably. Would it cost a lot of money? Yes. Might some of it be wasted? Probably. But when you read about vast Pentagon "overcosts," you don't feel so bad at the possibility of spending a little extra to cope with the decay of the cities and the people who live in them. Government officials, from the conservative Bush to the liberal Cuomo, keep talking about "budget crunches"; and some intellectuals refer sagely to the "limits of social policy." No doubt there are limits, but it might be a good thing at least to *approach* them.

This is the single greatest set of social issues—really, moral disgraces—facing American life today. In future issues of *Dissent*, over the next year or two, we're going to try to tackle them. No, we don't have all the answers. But we'll have some. At the very least, we'll try to stir up some feeling, some concern, some thought. This—together with discussion of the remarkable changes occurring in the Soviet Union—seems to us the central theme for the months ahead. Stay with us. □

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So, please . . .

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Maxine Phillips

TIME TO TELL THE STORIES

In the early 1970s, when I worked for a child welfare agency, a Catholic colleague told me that she became prochoice the day she was called to find foster homes for five children whose mother had just died from a botched, illegal abortion. I came of political age when such stories were common, and they fueled our efforts to make abortion safe and legal. Now, a generation of women has grown up without the stories, taking for granted what once meant so much suffering.

The right of women to decide whether they will be forced to bear children can no longer be taken for granted. The recent Supreme Court decision, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which allows states to further restrict access to legal abortion, is part of the relentless erosion that began soon after the 1973 decision that established abortion as a constitutional right. Cases that the court will consider in its next term could put safe abortions beyond the reach of most women. One case will look at whether states can mandate expensive licensing requirements for freestanding clinics, where most early abortions are performed, thus driving up the price of a simple procedure.

Money has always been a deciding factor. In those days I heard the stories of desperate women who borrowed from friends to go to other countries or other states. They lived to tell the stories. But since 1980, poor women in most states have been unable to receive Medicaid-funded abortions. Some 82 percent of the counties in the United States lack abortion services. Thus, poor women and young women, those most at risk in their pregnancies, have had to find money not only for an abortion but for travel and lodging. And the government's and medical establishment's refusal to aid these women has not been matched by any generosity toward their children.

Now the middle-class inhabitants of urban areas are threatened. A young neighbor handed me a leaflet for a prochoice rally. "I've never been to a demonstration in my life," she said. "But I'm going to this one." The political mobilization to elect prochoice legislators has intensified.

This assault on women is one with the assaults on minorities, the poor, and recent immigrants led by the government and carried out by this court with a vengeance.

For too many of our sisters, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* won't even make a difference. Their rights were abrogated years ago. Many of them ask where we were when that happened. In this mobilization we have an opportunity to build alliances across class lines, to campaign for real choices, not just in childbearing but in childrearing, as the battles for health care, day care, and education unfold.

It is time again to tell the stories. □

To Our Contributors:

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your ms—the mails aren't always reliable. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. No dot matrix submissions, *please*.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

(6) Please bear with us—we have accumulated quite a backlog of material, and you may have to wait for a few issues before you see your article in print.

THE EDITORS □

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Raymond Seidelman

THE SHORT SWEET SONG OF CHINESE DEMOCRACY

The main square in Nanjing, China is called the "Gulou," named after a five-hundred-year-old bell tower that used to warn the city's Ming subjects of impending attack. Today, the bell tower still stands, but is little more than a traffic island. In the shadow of the Gulou there is a little patch where old men come with carefully crafted, cloth-draped wooden bird cages. They hang the cages in the few sycamore trees near the bell tower and then uncover them. The birds inside, sensing that they are at home in the branches, sing their calls, and for a moment the din of traffic is lessened. The old men imitate their birds' songs, but soon the birds fall silent and the old men cover them up and go their way. The square returns to normal as if the birds had never existed.

I am writing five days after the massacre in Beijing. Today, I received a letter from a former student postmarked June 2 in Shenyang, China, two days before the massacre. The letter arrived ripped open; my post office stamped "arrived unsealed at 10562." Probably it had been opened and inspected before it left China; perhaps not. My student wrote, "Chinese have never been so united as one. The times have changed, which is very different from 1986. This time, I believe, Chinese people will win the battle for democracy and freedom." He was right, it was different than 1986, the last time the student movement was repressed, but in tragic ways that hardly anyone anticipated.

Cai Ruiwen would never have written this way a year ago. Nor would any of the thirty-five other graduate students to whom I taught Western political theory at the Hopkins Center in Nanjing. First in private conversations, then in the classroom and later in crowded but by-invitation-only sessions in a Nanjing University dormitory, I learned that the song of student democracy in China was at once various, fearful, hopeful, and not a little confused. My students must be as surprised as I am that a year later private conversations have turned into what is a repressed but unstoppable democratic movement.

When I first arrived in China, many of my students seemed unlikely dissenters, much less revolutionaries. As with most of the tiny number of graduate students in China, most are older because they had suffered through the ravages of the Cultural Revolution. Many of them had what were called "bourgeois backgrounds": their parents were intellectuals—usually college or high school teachers, sometimes doctors or officials, almost always Communist party members. Many of my students were old enough to have been Red Guards, only to be sent to the countryside by Chairman Mao when he no longer saw them as useful. A surprising number had been raised by older siblings or simply by people in their neighborhood, as their parents, sent to the countryside in 1966, had stayed there until after Mao's death. One Beijinger, now in the United States, claimed that he had not left his apartment in two years to avoid Red Guards and certain exile. Those trapped in the countryside had straggled back into the cities as porters or construction laborers, taken the examination to enter the university, completed their college degrees, and entered graduate school. Many were already assistant professors in history or political science, others were junior officers in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), a few were journalists. One, Zhang Xiliu, a member of a non-Han "national minority group" from Hainan Island off the coast of Vietnam, was already a high party cadre and had attended the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Beijing. The fact that they had been admitted to the then one-year-old Johns Hopkins Center in Nanjing bespoke a successful future, with the possibility of travel or study abroad and a government career. They were the future elite; on the surface, unlikely rebels against the "reformer," Deng Xiaoping, himself exiled in the same way during the ugly years.

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The first thing one learns in China is that while everything is politically charged, people seldom talk spontaneously about politics at all. These were advanced students, yet in our first sessions I became despondent about what I thought were their analytical lapses. I had given them excerpts from Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* to read, and then asked them to compare these to Eugene V. Debs's speeches and Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." A typical response from a student in the PLA was this: "Eugene Debs was a sincere socialist, but it is Milton Friedman who is correct because he knows that the development of the forces of production is a prelude to the development of socialism. The free market is necessary to achieve the Four Modernizations." It was, I thought, going to be a long year.

But I soon learned that these formulaic responses were what they thought I wanted and what they thought they could safely give me. Real political discussions had to take place after bonds of trust between the students and me and among the students themselves had been forged. For them, I was a bizarre, probably incomprehensible but doubtless trustworthy teacher—I seemed to criticize my own society as well as China's.

A break came two months later, when I decided to argue in a comparative history class that the Chinese revolution of 1949 had been more successful than the Russian because the Communist party in China had established firm ties to the peasants during the anti-Japanese war. The Chinese Revolution, I said, was at least democratic in the sense that the Communist party, through the "mass line," had to test its ideas with the people. The attempt to "modernize agriculture" was just the latest example of the party's ability to "concretize the ideas of the masses," I argued rhetorically. The pens stopped; I had at least gotten their attention. When I finished, a single hand went up: "Mass line is mass blind," a young party member, Yang Bo, said. "Teacher Seidelman, have you attended some kind of party school or are you joking? Nobody believes that there ever was a mass line." "Then why are you a Communist party member?" I asked. "My father is, and it may help me to get a job." There were titters, nods, and giggles.

After that, I began to learn about how Chinese intellectuals see themselves, the government and party, the West, and "democracy." My Chinese students did not seek to emulate "the West," really. The West was an unattainable and in any case un-Chinese concept, not a reality to be studied or imitated. What they admired about America was neither its culture, its politics, nor even its economy. They admired America for its luck and what they saw as our freedom from history, a freedom not possible for them because they bore the burden of over 2,000 years as a nation-state. Communism, the four modernizations, Mao, Deng, and the Cultural Revolution were considered only as the most recent and not particularly distinctive manifestations of the age-old, inevitable games of emperors and officials. Preferable to the Guomindang (Nationalists) and to the Qing (hated by everyone as a foreign dynasty because it had invaded from outside the Great Wall to conquer Beijing), Chinese Communism was just the latest and not the worst manifestation of dynastic politics, with its own natural cycle of birth, maturity, and death.

This should not be understood as fatalism, for the role of intellectuals in this tradition is potentially heroic. They have had the historic duty of sounding the alarm when dynasties begin to crumble. They are the catalysts and conscience of the nation, but at the same time are easily tarnished by the temptation of careers and by the conformity enforced by power. In a country where education is a precious commodity, intellectuals, my students believed, had a leading role. No other social class, including workers and definitely peasants, could penetrate the mysteries of the central state and at the same time know that the time had come to build a new one. Intellectuals, they knew, could never act alone: To build new states required the active cooperation of what my students called "the broad masses." But it was the intellectuals that remained paramount.

What disgusted my students was not the power of the government and the party but being ruled by corrupt and sycophantic idiots with no moral or political claims to govern. And this, most of my students kept saying, was what the Communist party had largely become in the afterwash of the Cultural Revolution. Very few people, even in the party, took Communist ideology to heart.

Yet they, too, were caught in the web: to marry, to travel, to work in one's own city, to work in the same city as one's spouse—all of these were subject to the permission of higher-ups, who had climbed the ladder of sycophancy only to demand it from their new subordinates. As good citizens they were expected to suffer a thousand petty judgments graciously, but such standards did not apply to the little and big tyrants in every workplace and in provincial and national government. Far from wanting to dismantle centralized authority, my students hoped against hope that it could be rebuilt with the incorruptible.

The life of a Chinese student or intellectual is not so much carefully controlled by ideological strictures as it is subject to daily indignities by authority. Some of the indignity is economic: Chinese students live on tiny incomes in cramped dorm rooms, are

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served poor food, and often cannot even afford to purchase books. In recent years this could be tolerated because no one else did much better.

That tolerance is now gone, for there has been too much hypocrisy. The major public event of my year in Nanjing was a courageous strike against the manager of our Center's *shitang*, or cafeteria. Not only was the food bad and prices high; the manager seemed to be diverting supplies and workers for private parties for people with "connections" at Nanjing University. The strike did nothing; for a few days the food was somewhat edible, but then the private parties resumed and the quality again declined.

There were possibly malign consequences for all who participated in this little event. While the Chinese director of the Hopkins Center was a kind man sympathetic with student concerns, his assistant, Huang Yu, seemed to have the real power. My students told me that Huang had been on the wrong side during the Cultural Revolution, that he had, in effect, been the snitch who had seen to it that his Nanjing University colleagues were sent to the countryside in the bad years. Unlike every intellectual over thirty-five that I had met in China, Huang had indeed spent his time in Nanjing and not in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. Now he was the unofficial snitch with arbitrary power over the students. Women students told me he had tried to molest them, something they said was very rare in China. But they could do nothing, since each student in China has a file, controlled by the administration of his or her work unit, that follows him or her through life. They are, of course, files students may never see. Students worried that Huang would get back at them in ways they would understand only later. In public the students who complained about him were especially polite to his face.

A thousand petty grievances mix with a sense of historical mission to form my students' perceptions of democracy and what was then their contained outrage. I wish I could say that the conversations in which I participated revealed a firm, Chinese conception of democracy. They didn't—democracy was defined more by what it was not. It was not dishonest or hypocritical. It did not mean that lower or higher officials could abuse their power for private gain. It was not pompous or closed-minded. It was sweet, gentle, efficient, humorous, and tolerant. Did it mean competitive elections? No, or at least not now. It especially did not mean the franchise for peasants, because they were too easily duped. Were workers potential democrats? Definitely yes, because they had been exposed to the diversity of the city, as well as to the same petty controls as intellectuals. Did democracy mean capitalism? In limited quantities, yes, in the sense of petty entrepreneurship, but getting rich should not be at the expense of others. Finally, did democracy mean abolishing the Communist party? No, it meant transforming it somehow, not because the record of communism had been so great, but because it was the only national institution worth talking about.

These ideas are hardly sophisticated ones, with systematic theories about when, how and why political life is going to change. Even less are they workable recipes for a future state. They are not remarkable for their clarity, but are for their simplicity, honesty, and even good-humored naiveté. They are not even remotely anticommunist, although they may be acommunist. A year later, they were apparently an inspiration to millions. To the regime, they are subversive enough to warrant the Tiananmen death sentence for thousands and probable imprisonment for thousands more. How naked and alone the regime must feel to have destroyed the flower of its youth and ultimately its only legitimate claim to rule.

People need each other in practical ways in China. Now those relationships are temporarily broken. My friends in China would not dare write to me. They probably wear the sullen faces that serve as testimony to the regime's new definition of public virtue. Some may be in jail, others in hiding, still others traumatized by the sacrifice of an entire generation and the needless slaughter of their comrades. Yet someday the covers will once again come off their cages, and they will sing again. □

Ed. Note: The names and homes of the Chinese students mentioned in this article have been changed.

We mourn the deaths of two distinguished contemporaries:

Sidney Hook

I. F. Stone

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Bogdan Denitch

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A NEW EUROPE

Increased economic political integration of the European Community in 1992, combined with the penetration of national economies by the world market, make it necessary for the West European labor movements to shift their strategies in a less national and parochial direction. This is essential if they are to deal with multinationals, the mobility of labor, and the constant danger of capital flight, all of which threaten the existing welfare states and social programs. In matters of social policy it becomes increasingly less relevant to think in terms of single nation-states. The West European Community will be the arena where, more and more, these issues will be fought out.

The labor-based socialist parties, as well as the Italian Communists now allied with them, are already the single largest organized political group within the European Parliament. No bloc of parties operates in an organized manner throughout Western Europe except for the socialist parties and their allies. Liberal and conservative parties are fragmented and nationally specific while the social Catholic parties are all but nonexistent in the North. The next planned expansion of the European Economic Community (EEC), will include the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA), with Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and Austria as members and with Finland and Yugoslavia as associates. This will strengthen the "natural" majority of the labor-based left parties within a unified Europe. Since most of them are officially neutral and not part of a military bloc, the entry of the EFTA group will increase the independence of the Common Market vis-à-vis NATO.

That, and the increasing talk of a "social character" for Europe—defending trade-union rights, health, pension, education, and basic human rights—explains why conservatives like Thatcher speak as increasingly shrill "little Europeans"—minimalist when it comes to the social policy prerogatives of the Community. This is why even the traditionally insular British Trades Union Congress is beginning to wake up to the socially progressive consequences of European unification. The point has been well taken by the socialist parties in Greece and Spain that look to the community to provide minimal European standards of social policy. In sum, the European economic unification in 1992 and the increasing independence of Europe from the Atlantic alliance will radically alter the politics of Europe.

The near demise of the cold war and the desperate needs of a debt-ridden Third World suggest Europe-wide reflationary strategies involving massive credits and aid to both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the underdeveloped South. Historic changes in world Catholicism also raise the possibility of alliances between democratic socialists and Catholicism in three major areas: a recognition that the North has a major responsibility to help the South; a joint agreement on the right of workers to form their own unions; and a joint concern with linking social justice and democracy. There is also agreement on defending an advanced welfare state. Add to these a common hostility to the nuclear arms race and world dominated by superpowers and we may be witnessing a historic shift in political alliances. The church no more pays obeisance to the "free market" than do the socialists.

The feasibility of continuing post-World War II class compromises and welfare-state settlements, as well as the ability of Keynesian economics to manage advanced capitalist industrial societies, is very much in question today. Some see this as the crisis of contemporary socialism, but it is probably more accurate to see it as the crisis of a socially liberal capitalism or, more accurately, a crisis of the neocorporatism that seemed to be the all-but-invincible wave of the future during the nineteen-sixties and seventies. For that matter, the whole Atlanticist cold war consensus is going through a profound and possibly terminal crisis.

There is a programmatic disorientation within most, if not all, of the democratic socialist and social democratic parties of the advanced industrial world. A crisis of confidence in a movement committed to a fundamental change is more serious than similar

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crises among supporters of the existing order. The latter claim that basic change, as such, is dangerous, undesirable, or impossible. Historically, the most fundamental claim of the left has been that it is possible for ordinary men and women to transform the societies in which they live and to do so democratically. It is this belief that is fundamental to socialism rather than state or social ownership of the means of production.

This is not the first time that socialism is in "crisis." it is, indeed, a recurrent phenomenon that permits some mild optimism about the present. Despite a decade of continual inner troubles, the social democratic parties achieved their widest electoral gains only to be turned back by the prolonged economic crisis that followed the oil shock of 1973. But "crises" change; in the late nineteen-eighties the socialists, with the Italian Communists, have achieved a plurality in the European Parliament. True, the labor-based parties have not yet caught up with the consequences of this plurality and the increased importance of the European Community. The elections in France, Sweden, and Belgium in 1988 went very well indeed for the socialists. Most observers believe that the German Social Democrats, with the Greens as a junior partner, are the likely next government of what is economically the most powerful country in Europe.

Obsolescence of the Cold War

Responding to its own economic and ideological crises, the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev is extraordinarily open at this time to political and economic reforms and proposals for radical cutbacks in military expenditures. This strengthens the Western advocates of disarmament as well as the tendency in Western Europe toward greater autonomy. In turn, exciting possibilities for democratic change are opening in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Long-range credits on favorable terms to the Soviets can advance both this trend and the modernization of their society. Such a policy would also help the West European economies in much the way the Marshall Plan in the forties helped the U.S. economy.

Western Europe is crucial for the future of advanced welfare states and democratic socialist parties. But Western Europe must shake off the domination of the United States. For U.S. military protection no longer to be perceived as necessary, Western Europeans must feel secure against military threat and political bullying from the Soviet Union. The ideal time for this to happen is during a period of major military cutbacks by the two superpowers in Europe.

Lions will not lie with lambs. But a limited war in Europe with conventional, or conventional and "tactical" nuclear weapons, will not take place. Even if it did, it is not at all clear that NATO would not win a smashing victory with the support of an East European population that certainly will not fight on behalf of systems it hates.

The growing autonomy of Western Europe was accelerated by the military and economic recklessness of the Reagan administration. It has been pushed along by Gorbachev's diplomatic offensive. This growing autonomy of Western Europe raises a number of possibilities: a neutral area separating Europe, from North to South, along the lines of the Olof Palme proposal for a nuclear-free zone, a unified neutral and demilitarized Germany much like contemporary Austria, a Finlandized Eastern Europe accompanying the complete withdrawal of all conventional and nuclear military forces from Europe by both superpowers.

The Germanies and European Autonomy

Any prospect of détente in Europe reopens the question of the unification of the Germanies. The proposal for a unified, demilitarized, and neutral Germany, like Today's Austria, has been offered again and again and is a nightmare for NATO's supporters, as it is for those who insist that the cold war must last forever. How can one imagine a NATO without West Germany, which provides half the army and the ground on which the conflict would be fought? What if the danger of military conflict in Europe is reduced to a vanishing point? "Austrianization" in what is known as the Rapacki Plan has a seductive allure. It is a version of the Palme proposal: a bloc of neutral states starting with Sweden in the North moving through the Germanies to Austria, then on to Yugoslavia. To mention only a few interesting side effects: it would deal a near fatal blow to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact; it would spread the neutral zone eastward and westward, with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland obvious candidates in one direction and Denmark, Norway, and the Benelux countries in the other.

The German Social Democrats have been pushed steadily to the left by the hostility of Washington under both Reagan and Bush on one side and pressure from the Greens and new social movements on the other. It is hard to imagine a more powerful electoral platform for the Social Democrats than to call for a unified democratic Germany in a peaceful Europe. These trends have been encouraged by the

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Soviet diplomatic offensive in projecting the image of a nation that genuinely needs massive cutbacks in military expenditures, and a prolonged détente, for its own economic reasons.

The Postwar Neocorporatist Compromise

In contrast with Great Britain, the continental trade unions have had to deal with a less confrontational business community and a social Catholicism almost as ambivalent about an economically liberal capitalism as it is about socialism. This has created room for a wide consensus around an interventionist state with respect to the economy. During the postwar decades, extensive welfare states became the norm throughout Western and Northern Europe. Reconstruction and the take-off provided by the Marshall Plan provided unprecedented full employment with steady and high growth. The traditional parties of the right, which would normally have objected to progressive social legislation and the growing influence of the unions, had been discredited in good part through their collaboration with the Nazi occupation or their lack of enthusiasm for the resistance.

Those were the years of Keynesian orthodoxy when it was generally believed that capitalist economic cycles were a thing of the past. It was broadly assumed that a new social compact between the major class contenders would be reached, based on creating huge "Fordist" markets throughout Western Europe, thus increasing the purchasing power of the working classes. Also, the cold war exerted pressure for substantial concessions to the socialist and Catholic trade unions so that they could effectively replace these led by communists. The economies were no longer perceived as zero-sum games, where the gain of one group could only be at the expense of another. The economy and society were seen as a growing pie, with plenty for all.

The foundations of the West European welfare states were laid in the productive postwar years. They achieved gains that had to be defended by their beneficiaries, so that the clientele of the socialist and labor parties throughout Europe expanded enormously. The welfare state remained immensely popular.

The socialist parties of Western Europe are now recovering from the doldrums of the early eighties. Their steady revival, illustrated by recent electoral trends throughout Western Europe (with the exception of Great Britain) is paralleled by greater confidence in a Europe independent of the superpowers.

A massively organized labor movement, as the Swedish experience shows, is automatically much less narrow and parochially trade unionist in its demands precisely because it uses the language of universal entitlement. The Swedish trade union policy of solidaristic bargaining, for example, does not favor the better-placed skilled workers at the expense of those in a weaker position. Swedish unions have not been an obstacle to the modernization of their economy. This has given the labor movement a greater legitimacy and political leverage than exists in other advanced industrial countries and has produced neither high unemployment nor high inflation.

Social Movements and the European Community

The growth of populist nationalism in Europe is as important as the better publicized social movements of the left. It will almost surely spread within a unified Europe in which populations move around freely. These conservative grassroots groups often reflect alienation from the impersonal, noncommunitarian social order that comes with modernity, along with an individualistic and competitive capitalism. Often propelled by that same alienation toward an ugly racism and nationalism, these groups provide a warning to all those who get too enthusiastic about communities, affinity groups, and community control. They are also a signal that modern impersonal capitalist, or perhaps just industrial societies have frayed the bonds of community beyond a point that many can tolerate.

The routinization of socialism, the most universal and widespread secular faith of our century, also leaves an empty space. That space is sometimes occupied by the new social movements of both left and right. Until the current détente, apocalyptic fears of nuclear holocaust fueled movements that provided a sense of commitment that many persons could not find in traditional organized religion or the mass parties of the left.

The peace groups, feminism, and free or countercultural groups are old friends on the left. They have always been there. Their reemergence has helped to recreate a broad new left not restricted to electoral politics or economic demands. The old mainline socialist left—before the time of the pragmatism of a "responsible" electoral welfare state, the "reformism" of the social democrats, and the organizational fetishism of the Leninists—was a much richer, more culturally flexible movement. Something of that past

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can be recaptured through new majority alliances of the left.

This must be achieved without giving up the labor movement's base in the classic industrial working class, the new working class produced by mass higher education, and the postindustrial and service sectors. What is needed is a "greening" of the classical socialist and labor movements without accepting some of the elitist attributes of the Greens. But while it is programmatically a good thing for the left to develop a more pluralistic organizational and political structure, excessive fragmentation can make it difficult to move forward on more than individual issues of reform. To move further toward social transformation, the strategic core of the left needs to be massively organized and able to attract large-scale participation of the type we find in the "thick" social-democratic political cultures like those of Sweden, Norway, Austria, and around the Italian Communist party. Stable political parties of the left are needed to deal with the complexities of modern technology and to propose alternatives in terms of *the common good* rather than those proposed by single-issue activists or those who reject modernity as such.

An Autonomous Europe

The current debate inside the largest and most significant Social Democratic party, the German SPD, represents a promising new departure. There is a strategic shift as significant as the Keynesian reformist program adopted in 1959 at Bad Godesberg. The new direction has been heavily influenced by three relatively new factors: the collapse of belief in the possibility of maintaining the post–World War Keynesian economic management that sought to provide full employment and an expanding welfare state; major openings toward reforms in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; and the growing impact of the Greens and other social movements. Summarized, the new thinking calls for an ecologically responsible, low energy, socially sensitive strategy for full employment and greater egalitarianism. It also proposes a broadened strategy of economic opening towards the "East" and a continued consolidation of the European community, which is to be pushed into major initiatives to deal with the growing North/South gap along the lines of the Brandt-Manley proposals.

Although the French experience suggests caution on the limits of what is possible with bureaucratic experiments in the economy, the experiences of Austria and Sweden show that single countries do have a range of options. They have maintained full employment and an advanced welfare state in a period of world economic stagnation and in the teeth of hostility from the international banking system. An integrated European Community provides a larger arena with which to carry on such a fight.

Socialists have two powerful arguments for a radical assault on the organization of work in modern industrial society. The first is that the huge increases in productivity in the countries of advanced capitalism have simply not been fairly distributed. A radical cut in the working day, week, and life, could be financed by a redistributionist wealth tax, rather than increases in income tax, which generally hit the middle and lower income groups. Increases in productivity make the present organization of work irrational and antisocial, since it forces millions onto the scrap heap of unemployment. But for a radical assault on the hours, days, and years of work to be anything but economic suicide the socialist parties and the trade union movement must make that push internationally, beginning in the unified European Common Market.

A second, gender sensitive argument for a redistributive strategy is that an economy must have a social purpose, a moral justification. Classical capitalism worked morally on the assumption that the massive pursuit of rationally selfish economic goals would produce a total social good that in turn would improve the lives of all. That is increasingly no more than a mockery in an economy where billions are made not by manufacturing or inventing new processes but by moving speculative paper and gambling on real estate. In this moral critique of capitalism, socialists are joined by the Catholic church in most of its recent statements.

New strategies toward work and increased sensitivity to the overwhelming problems of the environment require a new internationalism for the labor and socialist movement. Pollution is a classic example of a problem that requires a transnational solution. There is need for a universalist vision of the common good and a moral drive if a socialist movement is to be reconstituted. Human beings are not merely economic animals. The socialist movement, which is or should be much broader than the socialist electoral party, desperately needs those dimensions of fellowship, concern, and moral thrust that the religions at their best provide.

Therefore socialists must insist that the social welfare state is a part of the democratic social contract, a civic right. In modern democracy, an attack on the welfare state is an attack on the legitimacy of the social order itself.

For the labor and socialist movements to do more

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than merely survive, they have to begin doing again what they used to do. They have to undertake fundamental analyses of where society is going, probe the new class formations, and address the new forms of oppression in modern urban civilizations. □

Joanne Barkan

ITALIAN COMMUNISTS TRANSFORMED

The Italian Communists have finally tied the knot. Led to the altar by a new secretary general, Achille Occhetto, the party (PCI) has unmistakably espoused West European social democracy.

The prenuptial maneuvers had dragged on for years, with a squeamish part of the PCI still clinging to the notion of a *terza via*—a third road that ran somewhere between revolutionary communism and reformist social democracy.

That notion has been abandoned. Upon his election in June 1988, Occhetto laid out the tenets of the PCI's new line: democracy above all else, pluralism, mixed economy, and loyalty to Western alliances. He then installed a group of much younger party leaders who quickly began to spruce up the PCI's image.

In the past year, Occhetto's team has wooed environmentalists and feminists more intensely (the party now requires that women make up 30 percent of all leadership bodies). The PCI has taken a tougher stance in parliament as the main opposition party. Nonpunitive antidrug legislation and proposals to reduce military service are designed to attract young voters. A campaign against anti-union policies at Fiat helped reconnect ties to industrial workers. At its March 1989 congress, the party validated its democratic credentials by abolishing the last vestiges of democratic centralism.

In international affairs, Occhetto is hurrying to meet the new socialist relatives. Immediately after his election, he contacted the West European socialist and social democratic parties, proposing that the PCI meet with them to discuss ways of bolstering the European left. By January 1989, he was in Bonn, receiving a warm welcome from Willy Brandt, president of the Socialist International, and Hans-Jochen Vogel, head of the West German Social Democratic Party. The meeting was a diplomatic triumph—the first official encounter between these leaders.

Now that the Italian Communist party has divorced the communist movement, everyone asks if the PCI will change its name. Occhetto never answers no. Instead he says that a name change is part of a process that matures over time. In other words, when the benefit clearly outweighs any negative fallout, the name could go. Even the genealogy of the party is under review. According to Occhetto, neither the October Revolution nor Jacobin tradition sired the PCI. Instead, the party traces its lineage to the principles of the French Revolution. These PCIers sound more and more like Swedish Social Democrats.

Occhetto's rehabilitation program came not a moment too soon. The party was languishing—becoming comatose, some say—after a half-decade of internal debates on strategy and identity. The leadership was divided, the membership aging, and electoral support slipping away. Yet the PCI still counted over 1.4 million members and had the backing of 10 million voters.

At local conventions in early 1989, party members gave Occhetto their blessing—although some leaders suspect that the new line was not so much understood and absorbed in this first round as accepted in the long-standing tradition of obedience to leadership.

The first nationwide test came on June 18 when Italians voted for deputies to the European parliament. The contest served as a referendum on domestic politics. Occhetto did well. The PCI took 27.6 percent of the vote, an increase of one point over the 1987 Italian parliamentary elections.

As soon as the results were in, the party's organizational secretary, Piero Fassino, declared to the press that the time was ripe for the PCI to join the Socialist International. As an initial step, he proposed that the PCI leave the communist group in the European parliament and enter the socialist group.

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Occhetto's team knows exactly where it wants to position the PCI internationally. As for politics at home, the party is calling for a "left alternative." This means a coalition led by the Communists and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) with support from other progressive forces (such as the Greens) who agree to a rigorous reform program.

Unfortunately for the PCI, the way is blocked on both the international and domestic fronts by Bettino Craxi, secretary of the PSI. Craxi holds the international socialist franchise for Italy. He's openly irritated to see Occhetto accepted abroad as a legitimate representative of the democratic left. On the domestic scene, Craxi has made it clear for years that he will not ally with the much larger PCI until the Italian left has been "re-equilibrated"—that is, until the Communists are no longer strong enough to dominate the PSI.

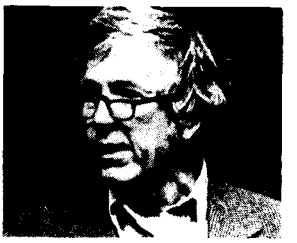
For now, Craxi refuses to budge. He's pursued a single-minded strategy to strengthen the PSI since 1978. The Socialists hold the balance of power in Italy (with just 14.3 percent of the 1987 parliamentary vote). No one can govern without Craxi's party. But along the way, the PSI lost most of its left characterization; the PCI has been wasting away in the opposition; and desperately needed reforms are stillborn.

Occhetto and company recognize that the collapse of communism in the East and the coming unification of Western Europe offer new opportunities (and perils) for democratic socialists. A coherent socialist force in the West could support the development of democracy in the East. Such a force is also needed to safeguard and expand rights in a united Europe where capital will know no bounds.

The PCI seems ready to move. But no one can say if the party will find the allies necessary for full participation in Italy's political life and Europe's democratic left. □

TOWARD A NEW SOCIALISM

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON



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Craig Calhoun

THE BEIJING SPRING, 1989

An Eyewitness Account

The climax of China's spring 1989 student protest movement is well known, at least outside of China. Troops acting to clear Tiananmen Square of protesters and enforce martial law succeeded in their charge, firing automatic assault weapons on unarmed citizens and sometimes wildly into neighboring buildings. People were crushed under the tracks of armored personnel carriers as they moved in to smash the statue of the "Goddess of Democracy" that had come almost overnight to symbolize the movement. Some students tried nonviolent protest tactics, sitting in before the troops. They were shot. Eyewitness reports emphasized the frenzied activity of the soldiers, their excessive and sometimes almost aimless violence. But though some may have run amok, there is no doubt that the overall attack was consciously planned.

Some of the soldiers were killed, mainly burned as crowds torched their vehicles. A few were beaten. Though dead students cannot be mourned publicly, China's government has gone to great length to honor the soldiers as martyrs, and to publish graphic accounts of their deaths. Student leaders had urged nonviolence, but the crowds by this point were not composed primarily of students.

Though these stark outlines of the massacre are known, it is much harder to make sense of it. We can only make educated guesses as to what the government was doing. Even harder to ferret out is clear evidence for just who was acting as the government at that point, what combination of the various factions that had used the student movement as an occasion for their own power struggles. We know that Zhao Ziyang and many of his associates and fellow "liberalizers" were toppled, but we do not know and probably never will know exactly the course of events that brought this about. We know that the government had been almost incapacitated by its internal struggles in the preceding weeks. But we do not know to what extent the events of the night of June 3 and morning of June 4 represented the policy of factions that had already succeeded in gaining power, or to what extent they were themselves tactics in the power struggle. Certainly they eliminated the argument that the Chinese government should use moderation to avoid inflaming world opinion. After the massacre, world opinion was already forfeit.

Since June 4 attention has been focused, ironically, on the killers not the killed, on the Chinese government and not the student protesters. It is important, however, not to let geopolitical considerations or the practical concerns with who has emerged on the top rung of Chinese leadership obscure the movement itself. Even our horror at the massacre should not make us forget just how remarkable an event this protest was. For the Chinese people, it has value as an inspiration, not just a cautionary tale.

I want here to look at some of the conditions and tactics that made the protest movement possible. My comments are based mainly on six weeks of "participant observation." They are not a final evaluation or a comprehensive report. They are an attempt to draw out certain key themes from the vantage point of the student activists. They leave many gaps, but, I hope, add a few points not always made in recent Western discussions. In particular, I do not try here to go very much into the question

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of students' ideology or goals in the movement. The present essay is not a comprehensive narrative, or still less analysis, of the student movement as a whole.

A Supportive Structure

The student protest of 1989 was in many ways a tactical triumph. It did not produce the outpouring of new ideas, the creation of newspapers and journals, or the level of reflective thought that had been part of the democracy wall movement of 1979–80. It did give rise to a number of innovations in struggle itself and to the largest popular mobilization independent of the government that the People's Republic has ever seen.

From the beginning, the "Beijing Spring" of 1989 bore testimony to the fact that even a relatively spontaneous movement depends upon organization. Neither feature necessarily contradicts the other. This is partly because spontaneity is not always a radically individual phenomenon, some of the current Western-influenced ideology of Chinese youth notwithstanding. Their spontaneous participation was nurtured in group discussions. They came forward organized by schools and within schools by classes. Small clusters of friends and classmates had discussed their complaints about the government and the state of Chinese culture for months; they had debated various ideas in the privacy of dormitory rooms and in semi-public gatherings at restaurants and campus hangouts. Indeed, one of the striking features of the protest movement from the very beginning was its ability to generate organization without requiring much bureaucratic apparatus or formal hierarchy.

At many levels, this ubiquity of organization was an achievement of Chinese Communism; every class had its monitor, for example, and they were as prepared to organize food for hunger strikers as circulation of course materials. Traditional Chinese culture also encouraged this sense of the primacy of the group. But at its base in 1989 was a more novel feature that helped to change the meaning of the whole process of solidarity. This was a strong ideology and actuality of friendship. Personal ties among individuals, created voluntarily rather than by the system, were highly valued and emotionally charged. Students debated, for example, whether the friendship bond—something perhaps closer to the strongest senses of Australian mateship than to the usual American sense of the word—should take primacy over marriage. They stressed high ideals of loyalty. They shared everything. Students well aware that the black-market rate for foreign exchange was some 50 percent above the official rate nonetheless exchanged money among friends at face value—even though foreign exchange was an extremely prized commodity for those who hoped to go abroad since everything from tests to application fees had to be paid for in foreign exchange certificates. One student I knew, eventually a minor leader in the protest, housed a friend in his dormitory room, even providing money for his friend's meals out of his own meager income (a standard tiny stipend augmented by teaching English to students preparing for exams). The friend was a graduate student at another university, but came to think of himself as a "professional revolutionary."

The institution of friendship had not always overridden ascribed group membership—kinship, *danwei* (work unit), class—in China. Previous policies of the Communist regime had in many ways specifically undermined it, calling for a commitment to ideology and party above such personal ties, creating powerful ritual occasions for friends and relatives to betray and criticize each other. Friendship, and also kinship and other directly interpersonal relationships, seemed of central importance to students' lives. Yet they are poorly grasped by either the notions of individualism or the equation of society with the large collectivity and/or the state. Students identified strongly with various bits of individualistic ideology, from Western writings on capitalism and freedom to the simple idea of the primacy of romantic self-expression (personified in China by the poet Xu Zhimo). A vaguely Rousseauian (or Californian) idea of the ultimate value of expressing one's internal feelings was very widely shared. The government's common taunt of "bourgeois individualism" seemed to

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hit it rather accurately. But the strong feeling for friendship, practiced with a level of loyalty that put most Westerners to shame, was not individualistic. It was truly social. I wondered how many students thought about whether their own espousal of individualism might be at odds with this other fundamental value. In any case, the resurgence of friendship was one of the most basic manifestations of the emergence of society beyond the reach of the state, and thus of a capacity for genuine insurgency and an independent public sphere.

One could see other manifestations of the development of "civil society," perhaps most notably the growing numbers of small entrepreneurs. Many of these were merchants. Some were to be found filling every free market (and lining quite a few sidewalks), their capital limited to the merchandise they could fit on a single table or the back of a pedicab—pots and pans, books and magazines, belts, bicycle bells, or postcards. A few of these *getihu* (small entrepreneurs) came to be owners of substantial businesses, operating a chain of market stalls, for example, or entering the wholesale trade. Some other kinds of enterprises contributed more directly to the beginnings of a public sphere in Chinese cities.

Restaurants, for example, flourished at all price levels, bringing a range of regional cuisines into Beijing and providing at least partially free public spaces. Some of these were operated on university campuses, using leased buildings. Perhaps not surprisingly, they offered the best, though not the cheapest, food on campus. Others, often much smaller, were located nearby, providing at four or five tables the opportunity for free discussion over Xinjiang noodles or Szechuan soups. Of course still others catered to a more upscale clientele of businesspeople, party officials, and foreigners, and charged prices which meant that most students would never see the inside of them. Owners of all these sorts of businesses contributed money to the protest movement; many joined in the marches of late May.

The spread of a private market in publications was a powerful direct influence on the rise of dissenting, pluralist thought. Gradually, since the early 1980s, independent booksellers had carved a major niche for themselves in China's intellectual life. To be sure, their most popular publications were sex manuals and salacious or gory novels. On the same tables, however, one could sometimes find such foreign works as Freud's *New Introductory Lectures,* C. Wright Mills's *The Power Elite,* or Locke's *Second Treatise*. One could also find, in between the government's periodic efforts to purge the market of counterrevolutionary materials, the publications of Chinese thinkers grappling with questions of national identity, the problems of bureaucratization, and the possible virtues of stock markets and private ownership of industry. The most influential works were probably works of fiction, a genre (or set of genres, from satire to realism) well-suited to raising controversial questions in less than explicit forms, posing problems without having to advocate solutions that might be at variance with party policy, giving expression to individual feelings and thus encouraging the idea of their primacy.

Various journals made a similar impact, both introducing Western ideas (in translation and summary or commentary form) and providing for an independent Chinese discourse. Those that were too independent were often short-lived, flowering mainly during such periods of democratic activity and apparent government openness as the 1979–80 democracy movement. They were especially likely to be suppressed, or to fail of their own internal problems, if they were published without institutional sponsorship and/or aimed at a relatively broad readership. Academic periodicals, on the other hand, were more stable. Though their openness to free expression varied with the political climate, they continued to publish discussions of new and often controversial ideas fairly continuously through the 1980s. Journals of philosophy called tenets of official Marxism into question, encouraging a flowering of interest in Western Marxists and critical theory. Sociological publications examined stratification in Chinese society. Perhaps the most influential were literary journals. These not only reinforced the influence of some fiction writers, they sponsored a discourse on Chinese culture. This was a discourse heavily influenced (in its more academic versions) by Western postmodernists, rhetoricians, and new

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wave literary scholars; Jacques Derrida, Wayne Booth, and Frederic Jameson all had Chinese fans, though based generally on a fairly fragmentary understanding of their French or English works and especially of their discursive contexts.

At the same time that it sought currency by international standards (or almost pathologically pursued Western trendiness), however, this discourse also sometimes found new inspiration in older (but for the most part still modern) Chinese writings, most especially those of Laing Qichao, Lu Xun and the protagonists of the May 4th movement. It addressed in original and important ways the problem of how Chinese culture—traditional and Communist—would fare in the twenty-first century. What were the cultural implications of importing Western technology? Was China's generally postulated economic and political backwardness due to fundamental cultural weaknesses? How would Chinese culture have to be strengthened (echoing Kang Youwei and the self-strengtheners of 1895) to provide for modernization, perhaps including democracy? These questions were not always posed straightforwardly, but they were debated by readers.

Perhaps the most striking semipopular manifestation of this was the television series *River Elegy*, shown in the fall of 1988. This was produced by a group of well-educated young men, heavily influenced by this literary-cultural discourse. They took their occasion and a good bit of their footage from a Japanese-produced travelogue about the Yellow River. Adding their own commentary and a wide variety of archival footage, however, they transformed the genre of travelogue into a critical cultural analysis. The Yellow River is traditionally seen as the heart and source of Chinese life. They portrayed it as the focus of an inward-looking culture, characterized by mud and soil erosion, disastrous floods, and unfortunate human interventions. A dominant motif was the challenge posed when the Yellow River met the blue sea; striking aerial cinematography imprinted this visually into the viewers' minds. Chinese culture was compared to that of "primitive" Africa—a shocking statement for proud and racist Chinese. The heritage of four thousand years of civilization was shown as more a trap than a resource. Mao Zedong was pictured facing the Yellow River but silent; this man who always had so much to say was quiet before the problems it posed.

River Elegy was also technically sophisticated by Chinese standards. It worked mainly through montage, with extremely rapid cuts from scene to scene (influenced I suspect by Hong Kong film fashions and reminiscent of recent trends in American television advertisements and music videos). In the space of a minute, a viewer might see Mao, the river, the Egyptian pyramids, the Great Wall, and a rally of the People's Liberation Army. Intentionally, it purveyed more information than any viewer could take in at one showing, and especially more than he or she could assimilate within received categories. It left the viewer with a welter of unresolved impressions. The voice-over provided only a partial framework for understanding. The film's real message was left just below the explicit, and heavily dependent on the visuals.

The film attracted a remarkably large audience on Chinese television, and was shown a second time before the authorities had second thoughts about allowing it to be shown at all. It also sparked a wide discussion among viewers. This reveals, first of all, that a much larger public than university-trained intellectuals was prepared to engage in a critical discourse about Chinese culture and China's future (though surely many found the film's more unkind comparisons and evaluations shocking, even offensive). In addition, the episode reveals that the government was not united in its stance on either Chinese culture or the limits of permissible public expression. The film could only have been made with the backing of fairly powerful figures, and its repeated showings indicated their strong support. A genuine liberalization in public expression helped to pave the way for the protest movement of Spring 1989. On the other hand, *River Elegy*'s third broadcast was stopped (as was a film planned by the same group on the May 4th movement).

River Elegy's popularity dramatized the centrality of the problem of culture for thoughtful Chinese in the late 1980s. Few

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doubted the desirability of economic "modernization," though what form it should take was debated. But how was economic change to relate to culture? What did it mean to be Chinese in a world of computers and FAX machines, tourists and joint ventures, the internationalization of commodity flows and culture? Maoist Communism had offered an alternative source of pride and a version of national identity (incorporating some aspects of tradition while rejecting others). What elements of Maoism or Confucianism could provide a vision for the future? Or had both decisively failed the tests of modernity? Did that mean wholesale Westernization or were there still the resources for an authentic Chinese path? In short, all but the most technocratic or cautious and party-loyal Chinese intellectuals, and a good many others besides, felt that China's modernization was in need of a cultural vision. However real the economic gains might be, they were either in jeopardy or even pernicious if not accompanied by a sound vision of Chinese society and culture.

This was the point where most students and intellectuals thought they had a crucial role to play. Some were primarily trained to play technical roles in modernization, as engineers, doctors, or demographers. Even they might have worries about vision. For humanists and the more culturally oriented of social scientists these worries were much more acute. And they were coupled with a sense that the government lacked respect for them and failed to provide for their role in China's modernization. Not all of these students had a strongly political conception of what to do, of how far an insurrection could go, of what role the Communist party might play or whether multiparty elections were possible or good, or of what form decentralization of bureaucratic power should take. But the political ideas of nearly all the active leaders, as well as the sentiments of more "rank-and-file" participants in the protest, were deeply shaped by this sense of cultural crisis and impoverishment. It was at the heart of the students' talk of democracy, at least as centrally as any imported Western specifics about the mechanics of liberal democratic rule.

These ideas and this sense of crisis had been so widely disseminated before the protest movement actually got going in April that they could be taken for granted among the core of student participants. This was simultaneously a strength and a weakness. It helped to make the substantial early mobilization possible. It also impeded the development of both the ability to spread the movement's message beyond its original student base and internal discourse about goals, methods, and priorities. This cultural concern informed both the students' initial very moderate message—essentially "take us and our ideas seriously, give us a voice"—and their subsequent determination to persist, as government recalcitrance made their movement more radical.

An Opportunity for Protest

The immediate occasion for protest was the death of Hu Yaobang. Though some Chinese students, especially in the United States, have since suggested that this was a deep, spontaneous, and heartfelt outpouring of sadness over a beloved leader, I think some skepticism is in order. Hu was indeed a relative liberal, but more important he was a symbol of the party's repression of political reform and his death a pretext for demanding more such reform. Hu, after all, had been no great advocate of free speech as head of the propaganda ministry, and he was ousted as party chief less for befriending students than for failing to contain their prodemocratic protests.

Hu's death, however, provided the students with a splendid opportunity and they made the most of it. It would be awkward if not impossible, they knew, for the government completely to forbid mourning the death of a sitting Politburo member who was also a past General Secretary of the Communist party. Activists decided to see how far they could stretch official tolerance. Their calls for demonstrations drew thousands of students carrying photographs of Hu and wearing signs of mourning. The government recognized the implicit protest but apparently decided to try to appease the students or demonstrate its tolerance by allowing them to carry on. Unappeased, the students added broader slogans to

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the signs of mourning and their numbers grew. Every Chinese observer read clearly the echoes of the public demonstrations that followed Zhou Enlai's death in 1976 and produced the notorious Tiananmen incident (the repression of the protest that created popular martyrs and was a key moment in the fall of the Gang of Four and return of Deng Xiaoping). The potential potency of such protests was thus unquestioned.

Hu Yaobang also provided a powerful, multivocal symbol. He was not only a liberal, but a clear Westernizer who had made a stir while I was in China in 1984 by (apparently impulsively) suggesting that chopsticks should be abandoned for forks. He was also Deng Xiaoping's personally picked and publicly designated successor. Deng had made providing for an orderly succession one of the centerpieces of his reform campaign. The sacking of Hu thus suggested that China had not shaken its "feudal" tradition of rule as fully as Deng claimed. Hu was a sponsor as well as a predecessor of Zhao Ziyang, the current party chief. Hu died during a Politburo meeting, apparently suffering a heart attack. This allowed for discreet rumors that he had either been humiliated by his colleagues or shocked by some action they contemplated.

By late April, after nearly two weeks of protest in the guise of mourning, senior officials began to lose patience with the students. Crowds now numbered in the tens of thousands and the use of Hu's death as pretext was wearing thin. A number of students thought the government would probably wait until after the end of the official month of mourning to ban further marches. In fact, those cadres who had already had enough apparently gained the upper hand and secured Deng's approval for a crackdown on April 25. This resulted in the now-infamous *People's Daily* editorial of April 26 which warned students none too delicately to stop creating disorder; the editorial implied that the government was ready to use military force (though as soon as it was published a variety of senior leaders including Zhou Enlai's widow were said to begin lobbying for more restraint).

Far from calling their protests off, students drew new fervor from the government's condemnation, seeing it as provocation rather than warning. They were particularly incensed that their own patriotic inclinations had been called into doubt, that they were being labeled troublemakers rather than good citizens exercising their constitutionally guaranteed rights of remonstration and free speech. Student leaders feared the worst, however, and several melodramatically made wills the night of April 26. The next morning, they were joined by the largest crowd yet, perhaps a quarter of a million people (though estimates vary widely and extend up to more than half a million). There are at most about 160,000 university students in Beijing, so any numbers beyond that suggest substantial participation from other groups—teachers, secondary school students, and the general public.

The march of April 27 was one of the most remarkable successes in China or elsewhere, and one of the most striking cases of bad government tactics I know of. As the column of marchers approached Tiananmen Square along several routes they met large contingents of military police. Anxiety grew amid the sense that the government meant to crush them. On Chang'an Boulevard, the immediate approach to the Square, protesters confronted blockades of policemen, apparently intending to halt the march. But the policemen were unarmed, and stood only a few rows deep against the massive crowd. They attempted briefly to hold their ground then gave way; a few scuffles followed. The crowd cheered as marchers pushed through. To compound its apparent madness, the government had arrayed several such police blockades a few hundred meters apart along the boulevard. The students pierced each one easily, and each time their confidence and enthusiasm grew. The government's intention may have been to provide a symbolic warning that the protesters were breaking the law. They ended up giving the students the feeling of having won a victory against the military!

As Chinese protesters have done at least since 1919, the students marched in rows with arms linked. But this time they added another bit of organization. Students around the perimeter of each group also linked their arms,

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providing a neat definition to each marching unit—class, school, and so on—and simultaneously keeping out *agents provocateurs*. This was not a trivial issue, because disorder of any type would delegitimate the students' cause in the eyes of the public. The government was apt not only to call the protesters hooligans but to employ some real hooligans to lend credence to the charge. This seemed to have happened only days before in Xian where a protest was marred by a small rampage of attacks on property.

The April 27 march galvanized popular attention and brought the first phase of student protest to its climax. This was no longer a protest confined narrowly to university students, nor could it rest any more on the pretext of mourning Hu Yaobang. It had taken on an autonomous significance. And the attention it galvanized was not limited to Beijing or even to China. From this point on, the protest began to be echoed in a growing number of other Chinese cities. Within a week, the first of eventually enormous contingents of students from around the country began to come to Beijing to join the protest. And the April 27 march made front page and first item television news around the world. The students were well aware of this international interest and had organized specifically to turn it to their advantage. They carried signs in English, French, and other Western languages. "Vive la liberté" and "Give me liberty or give me death" established links to the year's two famous bicentennials (albeit loosely in the second case, since the reference was revolutionary and not constitutional). They also, and perhaps more important, gave foreign photographers shots that were more likely to hold the attention of folks back home than were signs in Chinese. At this point too, at least some student leaders began to become much more visible in the press, precisely because they made themselves accessible to the press. Thus Wu'erkaixi's dormitory room at Beijing Normal University became a regular stop for journalists. But at the same time a few leaders from smaller schools—including the very active University of Politics and Law—began to chafe a little at the appropriation of this aspect of the leadership role by leaders at Beijing Normal and Beijing Universities.

The next big event was a march on May 4, the anniversary of the 1919 student movement. Though the government again brought out the military police, this time it had them discreetly withdraw to the sides of the streets rather than challenge the students directly. Deprived of the drama of breaking through police lines, the occasion was curiously anticlimactic. The demonstration was as large as on April 27, and the crowd of bystanders larger, but there was no tension and there were no events, music, or even major speeches to hold people's attention once they made it to Tiananmen Square. For a week afterward, students watched the protests dwindle as they waited to see what response the government would make to their demands. Most returned briefly to classes. The protest was a constant topic of discussion on campuses, but no one seemed to know what the next move was.

Leadership

The next move was unclear for three main reasons. First, the protest had moved beyond the range of lessons available from experience. Although protesters had posed implicit challenges to the government before, none had ever acted against direct instructions—backed apparently by military force—and gotten away with it. Students talked frequently with teachers and others who remembered earlier movements and who had thought at length about possible courses of action; they gave advice, but this mobilization escaped both their expectations and experience. Second, it was not clear what the government was going to do. The possibilities the students saw ranged from harsh crackdown to taking the students seriously and massively accelerating reform. Uncertainty about the government's actions stemmed from lack of knowledge of which factions in the government were in the ascendant, though most students did not yet know just how deeply divided the government was. It seems that some partisans of the reform faction may have talked with student leaders, or informed them of their views indirectly through senior intellectuals (and on the other side, Li Peng met with

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senior professors to try to get them to encourage calm and faith in the government on campuses). But though this may have affected actions at various points it does not seem to have been extensive enough to say that the movement was either substantially encouraged by any party faction or helped by access to much significant inside information. Third, the student leadership was itself both somewhat amorphous and unable to make and communicate decisions except by word of mouth and *dazibao* (large character posters).

Students had initially become leaders primarily by leading. That is, there was no prior stage of selection, a procedure by which individuals became officially sanctioned leaders. On a few occasions formal elections were held, but they were not the primary source of authority for leaders. Most were after-the-fact ratifications of leaders who had emerged in the course of practical activity. Some involved more or less fanciful positions—like the election of Beijing Normal University student Chai Ling as "Commander of Tiananmen Square." In the case of this election as of most others in China (whether as part of government officialdom or in a protest movement) the outcome was not in doubt when the voting took place; the vote-count ratified a decision that had already become more or less consensual. And being nominal "Commander" for a moment gave Chai Ling little opportunity to command, for the movement was not organized in a hierarchy of ranks.

Not only were leaders less official than Western media reports have frequently suggested, leadership was spread much more widely through the movement. Many different groups of students made innovations in protest simply by deciding that some particular slogan or line of action was a good idea and then putting it into practice. Others might copy or not. Important decisions were often taken by small groups; they did not all percolate up from the "masses." But the small groups were not always identical to or part of a centralized leadership. It is important to realize how rapidly the movement developed from bases on campuses of about ten thousand or fewer students to include hundreds of thousands of participants coming from various backgrounds with varying degrees of knowledge and commitment. The level of organization achieved was quite remarkable. Marches were orderly, not rag-tag affairs; in mid-May there was a notable increase in pageantry, with new banners and flags and matching T-shirts for a few groups. In the Square itself crowds were orderly, there was virtually no crime, health services were set up and when it became necessary, paths were made for ambulances. A system of passes was devised and enforced fairly effectively by student guards. But though linked, leadership and organization are not exactly the same. A lot of this organization came through the borrowing of templates from other settings (as with the role of class monitors) and from lateral interactions among groups. Only a portion was centrally initiated. As time went on, however, leadership became simultaneously more important and harder to organize and provide.

In late May, for example, leaders tried repeatedly to move slogans from an almost exclusive preoccupation with persons—"Down with Li Peng," "Deng Xiaoping step down"—to a renewed emphasis on democracy as such and other systemic changes. They failed. The earlier emphasis on systemic rather than personnel changes in government was all but lost as the movement broadened, anger grew, and confrontation intensified.* At the same

*An aspect of this that struck me especially forcefully was the students' refusal to use Marxist and/or Maoist rhetoric in any of their slogans. Even students who did use some Marxist categories in their analyses during small group discussions, and who might acknowledge abstractly the rhetorical force of using the government's own language against it, never made any effort to develop this in their public pronouncements. Whether this was simply because Marxism had been made boring by mandatory political study classes taught from translated Soviet manuals, or because it had been deradicalized by its use as an official ideology, or because it had been more deeply discredited by its role in Maoist rule I was never certain. But protesters did not accuse elites of class rule. Students who in the classroom were keen to discuss Marx's writings on alienation (and who regarded the government's dismissal of these "immature works" as merely an attempt to avoid the charge that alienation continued under socialism) did not use this language in movement gatherings. In this, the 1989 protesters differed substantially from those of 1979–80

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time that such ideological leadership was relatively ineffective, organization remained fairly strong. There was a crisis over managing and accounting for donations from abroad, but considering the pressure students were under, the fact that they could not even open a bank account, and that the sums were huge by the standards of their daily lives, this was minor. Supplies that arrived were circulated effectively. Tents from Hong Kong were distributed and arranged in orderly ranks. Couriers maintained contacts between students in the Square and their home campuses. Loudspeakers were set up. Troop movements were monitored.

There were two great triumphs of inspirational leadership. The first was the decision of May 12 to begin a hunger strike; the second was that which resulted in the erection of the statue of the "Goddess of Democracy" exactly two weeks later. Each involved an interaction between (a) a widespread sense that something needed to be done, (b) initiative from some particular individuals and/or small groups, and (c) a sort of ratification by the core leadership of the movement. In the case of the hunger strike, the initiating and ratifying groups were more closely linked, indeed heavily overlapping at the major universities—Beijing, Beijing Normal, People's, and Qinghua. With regard to the statue, however, the key role was played by students at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, people for the most part outside the "established" core of student leadership.

Both the hunger strike and the statue, however, were successful symbolic acts. They bolstered the enthusiasm and commitment of student activists when these were flagging, and they communicated about the movement to far-flung audiences. Each brought a new period of exhilaration to a movement that swung rapidly between emotional highs and lows.

The hunger strike was the more important, though the statue became an enduring symbol. Several tactical considerations guided the hunger strike, though it also followed some historical examples and was based in emotional expression. Most obviously, perhaps, those who planned the hunger strike were well aware of the impending visit of Soviet Premier Gorbachev. Not only would his visit inhibit the Chinese government from taking overt repressive action, it would bring an even larger flock of international reporters and focus more media attention on China. The protesters' message would be heard (and seen) more widely, and that itself would have an impact, perhaps, on the Chinese regime. But the students had to offer the reporters newsworthy events; the hunger strike provided both a focus of attention and numerous concrete events and photo opportunities as students collapsed and were carried unconscious to hospitals while others rallied to their support. And it was during the hunger strike that the largest of all the protest marches was held. More than a million people converged on Tiananmen Square on May 17. The impact of sheer scale was multiplied by the diversity of banners proclaiming the different units in attendance or offering witty or piercing slogans. And the marchers wore a rainbow of colors, one of the most visible signs of the freedom people felt in the midst of this brief relaxation of government control being a delight in more expressive clothing.

The hunger strike also aroused enormous sympathy on the part of ordinary people who heard of it. This meant at least most of the residents of China's larger cities and probably a fair part of the rest of the country. Scenes from the hunger strike were broadcast on Chinese Central Television and printed in *People's Daily*, but it cannot simply be assumed that these sources reached the whole of their routine audiences throughout the country. Constant reporting was also beamed back via the BBC and Voice of America, both of which can be heard widely in China (although the government jammed them with at least middling efficacy for some of this time).

Ordinary people felt drawn to and protective of the hunger strikers; they were prepared to see the latter as suffering on their behalf. This was partly because they were moved by the spectacle of relatively privileged university

who made considerable use of Marxist texts, including Marx's writings on the Paris Commune, as a basis for conceptualizing democracy. Perhaps the most important reason was simply the much readier availability of other languages of discourse after a decade of Western influence and internal reform.

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students worrying not only about their personal careers but about China's future, putting their health, future prospects, and possibly lives at risk. It was also because they could identify readily with some of the students' complaints—notably about corruption. And while political democracy was apparently a less pressing concern outside intellectual ranks, other people were prepared to see the student protest as speaking also for their more economic anxieties and demands.

The hunger strike quickly turned into an occupation of Tiananmen Square. This ultimately became problematic, as student leaders found that they could not end the occupation in a way that saved face, satisfied the full range of participants, and still avoided an intolerable confrontation with the government. But at the start it was a fine tactical move. Aside from the strike's successful communication to the Chinese people and abroad, the occupation of Tiananmen Square gave the movement a focal point. This was important not just for those reporting on it from outside but for the protesters themselves. Previously there had been no "neutral" turf on which activists from all the different universities gathered to discuss their plans and ideas. Now the Square became not only a symbol of success and an object of defense, it became the scene of nightly meetings of the student leadership.

Occupying the Square

On May 22, I sat in Tiananmen Square with a group of the occupying students. The sun was mercilessly hot and the pavement absorbed the heat and radiated it back at us. The Square had been occupied for ten days, and garbage disposal was a problem (though students worked hard to keep it under control). Banners that had been bright and fresh a week before were a little bedraggled. So were the students. On the other hand, the chronic water shortage was lessening. Pedicabs were wheeled around the Square with barrels on the back; protesters came and filled their own bottles, usually one- or two-liter plastic drink bottles of a sort that had only arrived in China during the last five years. Merchants were now donating food in more than ample supplies. I ate steamed rolls with my student friends and then shared their disappointment when a more tempting meal of sliced pork over rice arrived, just after we had taken the edge off our appetites. The pork dishes came in styrofoam containers, just as they might from any Chinese take-out restaurant in the United States, fifty at a time. Only three days before, many of these same students had ended a week-long hunger strike. One had made six round-trips to a hospital to be revived by intravenous drip and back to the Square to continue his fast.

Now he ate well, but talked of disarray and discouragement in the leadership. The previous day had seen crisis at the top, even while the "broad masses" of students were still savoring the support of Beijing's ordinary people and the government's inability to impose martial law. The three most prominent leaders, Wu'erkaixi, Wang Dan, and Chai Ling, had differences of their own (notably a clash of male egos between the first two) but had agreed that it was time to call for a withdrawal from Tiananmen Square. From the massive and festive May 4 demonstration, just a week after the April 27 triumph, to just before the massacre a month later, students occasionally suggested, "It's time to consolidate our gains; let's declare victory and return to classes." They didn't mean to give up, of course, only to step back from the most provocative tactics, and to put the ball in the government's court for a response to the democratic challenge.

At first this suggestion came mainly from older graduate students, somewhat less radical and more cautious in their overall approach. By the end of May, it had been voiced by key leaders of the student movement. Some thought a declaration of victory and organized withdrawal would bolster Communist party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang's chances to stay in power, and thus enhance the forces of liberal reform. Others worried that if the occupation were too prolonged, crowds would grow smaller and the movement would look gradually weaker. Still others simply wanted to avoid violent repression. By June 4 it looked like the last argument, at least, had had significant merits.

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Nonetheless, in the May 21 midnight caucus of the leadership, the leaders sharing this view were outvoted by a substantial majority. Wu'erkaixi had retreated to collect his thoughts and recover his strength. Wang Dan sat for hours with his head in his hands, sometimes crying in frustration. The problem was not just that the occupying students were not following his leadership but that there was no coherent alternative. The decision had been made, it seemed, to stay in the Square. But there was no alternative organization to that which seemed to be losing its efficacy and no particular plan about what to do while the occupation was continued.

What would the American Students for a Democratic Society have done under similar circumstances, asked my friend, the main student leader of one of the smaller but prestigious Beijing universities? I wasn't sure, I said. In retrospect, however, it seems to me that the SDS quite likely would have done, and over the long run did do, pretty much the same thing. Though comparisons with the Western student movement of the 1960s were often misleading about the Chinese students' struggles in 1989, there was a striking similarity here. The SDS (and more generally the leadership of the sixties struggles) dissolved in factional fighting (even before one faction launched a takeover) and lost its ability to lead a movement that had grown rapidly both beyond the core that had been a part of the long discussions leading up to it, and beyond the movement's organizational capacity. So too in Beijing. There were clashes of egos and ideologies among the leaders. Protesters who came from outside of Beijing now rivalled and would soon pass the numbers of those from the capital's universities. Those who came later often felt a need to demonstrate their own commitment to the struggle by taking stronger positions or engaging in more extreme tactics than those who began the fight. At the same time, their understanding of the slogans and goals that guided the movement was often fuzzier and shallower.

At various points, some students tried to push the movement ahead by more radical measures. The most striking of these was the declaration of a handful of hunger strikers that they planned to burn themselves to death if the government did not meet key student demands. This threat was made repeatedly during the week after May 13. On at least one occasion the would-be martyrs got so far as dousing themselves with kerosene before they were prevented by other protesters from completing their threatened immolation.

This incident made me think of the comments Lu Xun (China's greatest modern writer) made on the death of Qiu Jin some eighty years before. Qiu Jin had been one of the first women to rise to importance among China's radical modernizers, and had studied in Japan at the same time as Lu Xun. There she had developed a reputation as a fiery orator and drew large and admiring crowds. Her fame continued to grow when she returned to China. She played a key role in building a school and joined with her lover and others in planning an insurrection. Eventually their plot was uncovered. She was warned by friends that the army was coming for her but chose to remain at her school, hoping to make a dramatic last stand with the arms which had been stockpiled there. She was captured and ultimately beheaded. Lu Xun wrote, however, that she had been "clapped" to death. In other words, the crowds that had urged on her speeches and applauded her protestations against the government had implicitly pushed her to ever more radical positions. She could neither pause to consolidate her gains nor escape when the troops came without humiliation and betrayal of her own sense of direction. The complicity of the crowd in her death went further. Their applause was not just the product of agreement with her complaints, but of a pleasure in the entertainment her protest provided. A crowd would also gawk at her execution.

So too in the "Beijing Spring" of 1989 and in varying degrees—so too always. A crowd of a quarter of a million people is impressive when observers and participants expected only a hundred thousand. But it quickly establishes a new norm. To maintain a sense of momentum, to remain newsworthy, activists must increase the numbers in the crowd. Or they must do

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something more dramatic than merely marching. Attention will always be focused on the apparent leaders and the core activists, but the crowd on the fringes shares implicitly in responsibility for the actions taken. Those who cheer encourage those who demonstrate. Those who merely watch still swell the crowd counts. Simply by attending, every one of us, Chinese or foreign, upped the ante for the protesting students.

So, almost invisibly, the stakes kept being raised throughout the month of May and the first two days of June. The government tried concessions. State Council spokesman Yuan Mu, for example, met with some students for a televised dialogue. It was not open enough and he was not senior enough (or forthcoming enough) to satisfy many people. It encouraged further action, however, not just by failing to satisfy but by seeming to prove that protest could bring results. The government tried condemnation and the imposition of martial law. Li Peng's speech declaring martial law was like gasoline on a fire; students who previously were unsure of how far to go or whether some moderation might bolster the cause of reform immediately took to the streets, insulted by his tone and angered by his denial of everything they called for. And of course the imposition of martial law failed, at least for two weeks, with troops stalled on the periphery of Beijing. The soldiers' inability or unwillingness to enforce martial law was widely felt as another triumph. But just as it prevented short term repression it raised the stakes of action yet again. However orderly they might be, the students and their allies among the citizens of Beijing were now engaged in what the government would clearly see as a sort of illegal occupation of the city.

The flow of students from outside of Beijing into Tiananmen Square contributed to a sort of radicalization in a different way. These students had started coming in large numbers and to stay for an extended period of time shortly after the hunger strike began. They established camps under the banners of their various schools. They had not been involved in the early stages of protest, and so may have felt an extra need to prove their commitment to the cause, to match or top the actions taken by the Beijing students. They were also cut off from various potentially moderating influences. Only those most committed to the struggle had made the trip to Beijing. Where local students constantly mingled with less committed or less radical classmates, and thus were reminded that their views were particularly strong, those from outside Beijing had few such contacts. Local students also talked more often to family members and to teachers. Perhaps most important, the students from outside of Beijing were not well integrated into the leadership of the movement. They had no voice in the most prominent ranks of leaders, and there were fewer strands of communication spreading information, views, and instructions among them.

These students from outside Beijing played a central role in the decision not to withdraw from Tiananmen Square at the very end of May, a few days before the massacre. They had not been in the protest as long, and so were perhaps not as tired of it. More to the point, withdrawing from the Square meant returning to their own homes or campuses. This might expose them to retaliation from local officials (many of whom were less sympathetic to the protests than were leaders of some of the Beijing campuses, nearly all of which had at least large and powerful proreform factions). It would also cut them off from the center of protest. Beijing students could stay intensively involved after a withdrawal; at best those from other cities could try to carry on with local protests but out of both the limelight and the main lines of communication.

Many of the non-Beijing students did leave during the first three days of June, but this may have meant that those who stayed were all the more determined. In any case, on the fateful night of June 3, as the army approached Tiananmen Square, the students from outside Beijing are reputed to have decided for the most part to stay put while large numbers of local students withdrew to the south.

Leaving Tiananmen Square was important not just to avoid a massacre. At the time, no one expected a massacre of the sort wrought June 3 and 4. Students expected tear gas and

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rubber bullets. Rather, the issue was how to reorient the movement towards long-term struggle rather than short-term protest. Even among those who shared this view, there were reasonable arguments for staying in Tiananmen Square—the need for a focal point, for example, and for continuing to show the citizens of Beijing that their support was necessary. The point is not to judge whether withdrawal would have been the right move or wrong. Rather, it is to see how hard it is for a movement like this to transform itself into the sort of organization that can carry out a long-term struggle, shifting as necessary from what Gramsci would call the war of position to the war of maneuver—or in this case back again.

One of the difficulties faced by the Chinese student protesters in 1989 was that they lacked the luxury of building a movement gradually, carrying on discussions, and building solidarities over a period of months or years. It is true that the movement had grown out of months of complaint about China's current situation, not sprung full blown into action after Hu Yaobang's death. It is true also that it is not an isolated event but the latest in a series of prodemocratic protests including those of 1979–80 and 1986–87—and stretching back also to the mourning of Zhou Enlai, the Chinese Revolution of 1949, the May 4th movement of 1919, the Republican Revolution of 1911, and the examination candidates' remonstration and repression of 1895. Nonetheless, at least in recent years, prodemocracy protests have been relatively brief incidents, not long-term movements. The government has repeatedly shown its capacity to stifle public discussion. China is remarkably lacking in free spaces for such discourse. Compared even to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, China is short on institutions of "society" separate from the state, and short on privacy. A bit more of either of these would allow more publication of an unofficial press, for example, or more links to be forged between members of different potentially oppositional groups, such as workers and students.

Without either free public spaces or privacy, democracy is unlikely to get very far. It is possible that reform will bring more of each to China over the next few years. It is likely that there will be more flowerings of dissent like the student movement of this past spring. But until deeper roots are laid, such protests will continue to echo the old Confucian idea of the people (or the intellectuals) remonstrating with the ruler. They will not be manifestations of alternative bases for government so much as attempts to remind those in power of their responsibilities. One of the main significances of the tactical difficulties I have described, and of the particular pattern of success the movement achieved, is that they do not suggest a capacity to supplant the government so much as to deliver it a kick in the rear. The government has responded so far mainly by kicking back. It may also try to clean up its act, for example by policing corruption more closely. This kind of popular movement can hope mainly for concessions. Its strengths are its ability to make life difficult for leaders, and especially to play leaders off against each other.

The long scope of Chinese history can breed depression over the slow pace of progress or optimism because martyrs are not forgotten. In trying to further the cause for which people died this year, a key issue will be whether ties can be forged among different groups—intellectuals, students, workers, entrepreneurs, officials, and peasants. For all but the last there were at least the beginnings of joint efforts in this spring's protest. If these can begin to be secured, or even institutionalized, then there will be a stronger basis next time. That there will be a next time seems almost certain. Whether it will be in two years, five years, or ten is less clear. At some point in the not too distant future, Deng Xiaoping will die; at that time a new power struggle within the government will quite likely create an opening for protest from without. In the meantime, the way will be paved for the next struggle if discussion improves ideas, if associational links are strengthened, and if the memory of this movement is kept alive. None of these, however, is an easy task. □

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Benjamin I. Schwartz

ON THE NEW TURN IN CHINA

With Some Observations on "China Watching"

This may hardly be the ideal moment for general reflections on the significance of the present tragic turn in Chinese affairs. The brutal repression in Tiananmen Square was a decisive event, but the shape of things to come is still not entirely clear even though the signs are increasingly ominous.

Before I deal with the recent events, I want to say something about the episodic nature of the history of mainland China during the last forty years and its significance for the entire enterprise of what has come to be called "China watching." Without claiming any particular wisdom for the highly diverse group of academics and journalists who engage in this enterprise (their ability to predict specific events is certainly not greater than that of American economists), we can say that they have all been forced to relate themselves to the shifting turns of political history. Since these episodic shifts have generally been associated with the conscious political decisions of political actors, a good deal of attention has necessarily focused on what is considered by many in the academy to be the superficial and unfashionable discipline of political history. Much attention has been devoted to the decisions themselves, to the role of ideology, of personality, of factionalism, of political-interest conflicts, and so on. In the opinion of some, there has been a deplorable neglect of the "deep underlying" socioeconomic structures of the "system."

A contrast has often been drawn with the Soviet watchers, who during the sixty or more years in which the "Stalinist system" prevailed were able to provide us with ample accounts of the "deep structures" of Soviet political organization, the Soviet economic system, the system of police control, and the systems of ideological control. In earlier years there was some debate in Soviet studies over whether extreme state terror and gulags were a vital organic part of the system, but after Stalin's death, there seemed to be a general consensus that the system could survive without these more extreme phenomena. Khrushchev created some problems, but with his demise the essential features of the system remained in place. To the extent that one could continue to say "more of the same next year" one could say that the Soviet system was predictable. Finally, there was even the notion that the system possessed inbuilt mechanisms that precluded any possibility of change from within. It came to be accepted that the Stalinist system could persist without Stalin. The role that political conflict and political decisions had played in inaugurating the system during the twenties somehow faded into the background and it came to be treated as a kind of enduring geological formation.

Now it is by no means my contention that there have been no enduring constants in the forty-year history of the People's Republic, although I would prefer not to use the mischievous word "system" in the full and comprehensive sense of that term. The Communist party succeeded very quickly after 1949 in imposing a fairly efficacious political control of mainland China, and despite all the vicissitudes of the following years (some created by Mao himself), the political unity of China has been maintained for good and ill. It

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has certainly been sufficiently effective to raise to unprecedented heights China's standing as a nation in the international arena. The Leninist conception of the transcendental authority of something called "The Party" has, in one form or another, survived all vicissitudes, including the most recent threat to it (as perceived by Deng Xiaoping) in the spring of this year. When I refer to the Leninist conception of transcendental party authority, I am not necessarily referring to the party's formal organizational structure or even to the corporate apparatus of the party. During the cultural revolution this transcendental authority was presumably concentrated in the person of Chairman Mao himself as against the established organization and apparatus, and at present it resides in the group of Deng and his closest cohorts whatever their formal party positions. Also, for a large part of the history of the People's Republic (perhaps least marked in the last ten years) political functionaries of all ranks have played a highly obtrusive role in the lives of the entire population. No doubt other constants could be mentioned. Yet all these constants taken together have provided us with little predictive power in plotting the evolution of shifts in policy.

It may, of course, be argued that policy decisions belong to the superficial sphere of the "history of events" while the more or less enduring constants belong to the "deep structure." In fact, of course, the decisions were made by a Leninist leadership that took for granted its power to shape such "deep structural" factors as the fundamental organization of agriculture, the role of intellectuals, and even models of economic development. What, then, is the relationship of the "history of events" to the deep underlying forces? If one is confident of one's theory or model, one may simply dismiss policy decisions that move in another direction as evanescent wave patterns on the surface of the sea. At this very moment there may be adherents of the "totalitarian model" who feel thoroughly revindicated by the latest events in Beijing. On the other hand, some political happenings may be treated as volcanic eruptions that reveal deep shifts in the geological structures. Even the shifting decisions of leaders can come to be regarded as manifestations of well-rooted "social evolutionary" forces. Hegel, in coping with the problem of the "great man" in history, was prepared to see Napoleon as the World Spirit incarnate while Stalin has been regarded as the embodiment of a necessary stage in the laws of economic development in backward countries. Thus at the beginning of episodes such as the "hundred flowers" (1956–57) and the "great leap forward" (1958–60) in China—episodes in which Mao truly played a commanding role—foreign observers could never be sure whether shifts of policy were "superficial" political shifts or represented long-term shifts in the "underlying forces." China watchers, particularly if located in the social sciences departments of universities, were under unremitting pressure to come up with the "deep theory" or "model" that would explain the latest episode. Naturally all such models, since they were "deep," implied the capacity to extrapolate the long-term consequences of the model into the distant future.

In the period 1952–55, when China seemed to be slavishly internalizing the Stalinist system in every field of social and political life, and when the trajectory seemed to point to an ever closer approximation to that system, the "totalitarian model" enjoyed enormous prestige. Its plausibility was even enhanced by Karl Wittfogel's theory of "oriental despotism," which added a sociocultural dimension to the modern Western theory of totalitarianism. By the "totalitarian model," I refer not only to what might be called the "totalitarian aspiration" but to the notion of the actual achievement of the total control of every aspect of human life including the ability to transform the psyches of vast populations. In the case of China the millennial history of oriental despotism had perhaps made available exotic techniques of social-psychological control that were not available even in the West, leading to much research on the peculiar efficacy of thought control ("brainwashing"). The French journalist Robert Guillain, who traveled in China in the fifties and who was able to elicit the same stereotyped responses to all questions wherever he went, reported that China had effectively

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been transformed into the kingdom of blue ants. Any argument that there may have been present on the Chinese scene silent factors that ran counter to the possibility of a total internalization of the Stalinist system tended to be dismissed. Even such a simple question as whether—given the demographic facts of Chinese life—China could long afford to indulge in the kind of neglect of the agricultural sector that was built into the Stalinist model received little attention. The question of whether "oriental despotism" provided an adequate "key" to the vast and complex sociopolitical history of China resounded all the more majestically in the vast cavern of ignorance of China's complex past.

Stirrings among the Flowers

In the years 1956–57, however, the "hundred flowers" movement emerged in which Mao and others played a considerable role. Even in terms of elemental political psychology one might have entertained the possibility that a Chinese leader who had actually developed his own ideas in Yenan before 1949 and who probably was deeply ambivalent about Stalin's claim to supreme authority might not have been forever bound to all the particulars of the Soviet system and might even have been open to new suggestions. It was indeed in the "hundred flowers" period that Mao found himself again as the effective political and ideological leader of China. It was in this new mental frame that he was prepared to entertain the idea that China needed to reassess the role of its intellectuals despite his continued suspicion of them. With this opening up of new spaces of discussion and experimentation in the economic and cultural spheres, the "totalitarian model," with its emphasis on stasis, suddenly became questionable and gave way to "developmental" and "modernization" models. In both the Soviet Union and China there had been impressive economic growth. Had these economies not begun to approach a level where one could begin to expect economic, cultural, and perhaps even political liberalization? Did Mao Zedong not comprehend the long-term implications of his new policies? By the summer of 1957, however, it became clear that in fact he was to become much more obsessed with certain unanticipated short-term political consequences, particularly by what might be called the emergence of the student factor. A new generation of university students (undoubtedly influenced by some of the older intellectuals), which had been subject from early childhood to all the totalitarian techniques of thought control, suddenly began to express devastating critiques of the party's claim to transcendental authority—to the obvious dismay of both foreign adherents of the totalitarian model and Chairman Mao himself. Like the Deng of 1989, Mao had not come to power to witness any challenge to the transcendent authority of the party.

With the abrupt shift to the antirightist campaign of 1957 and finally to the apocalyptic vision of the "great leap forward" (1958–60) there was an abrupt decline in the fortunes of a development theory that relied heavily on economic analysis and on Weberian notions of rationalization. On the rise of the communes, the emphasis on the collective moral fervor of the peasant masses, and the combination of fervent faith in rapid development with an anti-economist view of the motive power of this development, we find a revival of the totalitarian model and of the notion of the peculiarly exotic "Asian" nature of Chinese totalitarianism. After all, Stalin at his most totalitarian had never denied the role of material incentives and of technology. It was at this juncture that talk of a new "Asian Communism" came into vogue. Many members of the "New Left" of the sixties, having become enthralled with the Mao of the "great leap forward" and later of the "cultural revolution," became convinced that he had indeed discovered a sovereign method to bypass all the evils of inequality, individual self-interest, and bureaucracy, even while pushing forward the modernization of the society as a whole. Mao was indeed the voice of the masses incarnate and thus no deep and painful inquiry was required into how his visions related to grim realities on the ground.

Although the "New Left" Maoists were to blend the visions of the "great leap forward" and the cultural revolution into a new "model," we now know that disastrous events unantici-

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pated by Mao brought an end to the "great leap" and created a rift between himself and the bureaucracy as a whole, which in the end rejected his anti-economistic bias. Thus when Mao retired to the background during the early sixties, the bureaucracy returned to a more economically oriented "pragmatism." They were no longer enthralled with the Stalinist model, and there was even cautious revival of some of the intellectual openness of the "hundred flowers" period. Among Western China watchers in search of a model, there was for a brief time a revival of the rational-development model—a revival soon aborted by the wrath of the aging Mao.

The cultural revolution of 1966 posed in a most acute form the problem of the role of a "great man" in history. One could truly say, "No Mao Zedong, no cultural revolution." Relying on the sheer potency of his own cult, Mao managed (with tacit support from at least some sections of the military) to override and humble the party bureaucracy, to concentrate in his own person the mystique of Leninist infallibility, and at least for a time to enchant and enthrall the student youth with his apocalyptic vision of a pure society. No doubt part of his initial appeal to them lay in his systematic desanctification of the party bureaucracy. What then could one say about the deep socio-economic-cultural causes of this episode? To be sure, Chinese society of the sixties was undoubtedly ridden with deep social and economic tensions and conflicts. The cultural revolution did indeed lay bare some of these tensions and conflicts. Would these tensions themselves have produced anything like the cultural revolution without Mao? The New Left admirers of Mao might have had faith that Mao had actually found a new path to modernization that would bypass all the evils of materialistic selfishness and of bureaucracy, but the subsequent course of events proved that the grand old man had no idea of how to implement his apocalyptic vision in concrete terms. The cultural revolution does indeed raise deep theoretical questions about the potency of the Mao cult and the behavior of human beings in extreme situations, but these questions may relate more to depth psychology or philosophic anthropology than to sociopolitical models.

The Modernizations

With the death of Mao, we finally have the emergence of Deng Xiaoping and the period of the "four modernizations." Was this then to be only another episode in the episodic history of the People's Republic or had the country finally entered onto a steady mainstream of development uninterrupted by the arbitrary caprices of the aged Mao? It is quite clear that the period from the late seventies to this year has indeed been entirely different from all previous periods, not only in terms of its duration but in terms of the decisive turn by the leadership (even the "conservatives") from Mao's anti-economism to a deep commitment to technological and economic development. In fact the "four modernizations" have already had a visible impact on the society and there have been tangible, striking successes in the sphere of economic development. In its decollectivization of agriculture the new regime demonstrated its willingness to support deep institutional change in pursuing its developmental goals. Above all, the new spaces of freedom opened up in this period have made it possible for us in the West to come into closer contact with the living reality of Chinese society and to see this society in its complex multiplicity. We have come to appreciate the reality of regional differences, to know a multitude of individuals as living individuals, and even to have direct contact with "ordinary people." Even if the current turn leads back to a regime of silence and uniform standard responses, I trust that we will never again allow ourselves to return to the stereotype of the kingdom of blue ants.

What then can be said of the attitude of the old party leadership, which returned to power after the humiliations of the cultural revolution? They certainly did not come back with any desire to witness the demise of party authority. In fact they were firmly convinced that the authority had been illegitimately usurped by the aged Mao, and there is no reason to assume that Deng Xiaoping, who, in fact, became a leading policy maker, was any more willing than any of his elderly colleagues to witness the demise of the ultimate decision-making power of the center of party authority. When the "democracy wall" movement of

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1978–79 raised the dread possibility of imposing institutional limits and controls on the party leadership, Deng promptly proclaimed the "four cardinal principles," which reasserted the unchallengeable authority of the Communist party, meaning primarily its top decision makers. The legitimacy of this authority derived from the fact that the party virtually represented the "people's democratic dictatorship" and was presumably based on the doctrines of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, but as a true pragmatist Deng tended to focus on the idea of party authority itself rather than linger on the presumed doctrinal base on which it rested.

What differentiated Deng from some of his colleagues, however, was that having presumably assured the unassailability of ultimate party authority, he proceeded to pursue the goal of a "wealthy, powerful, and modernized China" with enormous boldness and willingness to take risks. He had no doubt that China would require the talents of the intellectuals and also realized that to win the intellectuals it would be necessary to create an atmosphere that would foster a certain space of freedom and security for all intellectuals, just as it would be necessary to secure for the people as a whole a certain sense of immediate improvement in their material lives. He was indeed quite prepared to go forward with Bukharin's motto, "Enrich yourselves," for the population as a whole. He seems to have genuinely appreciated the need for legality in the economic sphere and even in some areas of civil law. He also seems to have been prepared to accept the decentralization of power in the realm of economic life, perhaps on the tacit assumption that such power could always be reclaimed by the center if necessary. Finally, in his own mind he may have drawn a distinction between the extension of individual freedom in the economic and cultural spheres and the call for "bourgeois democracy" as a challenge to the decision-making power of those on top. He often paid lip service to the need for "political reform" and even seemed prepared for minor dabblings with the political structure, but he never seemed really serious in this area. On the question of cultural and ideological control he seemed to vacillate occasionally when his more cautious colleagues urged the need to combat "bourgeois spiritual pollution." Yet in the end his pragmatism may have led him to feel that "ideas in people's heads" were not important enough to permit a diversion of energies from the tasks of modernization.

In retrospect, it may have been precisely his pragmatic bent that led him to underestimate the depth of alienation created in the young by the cultural revolution. The extent of the alienation was made plain to me from conversations in 1981 with former Red Guards who had witnessed both the cultural revolution and the "democracy wall" movements of 1978–79. It became clear to me that although they had felt betrayed and tricked by the aged Mao, many had nevertheless also absorbed the message of Mao's systematic desanctification of the party bureaucracy. Even though they seemed to respond with gratitude to the new policies of "liberalization," some did not refrain from raising questions about the legitimacy of Leninist authority itself, and Deng responded at the time with predictable anger as well as with the promulgation of the "four cardinal principles." It is nevertheless clear that this older generation of youth and older intellectuals managed to transmit its rejection of the Leninist mystique to the present student generation.

One can only speculate on why the same Deng, who with his four principles had clearly tried to fence off the question of highest party authority as forbidden territory, continued with occasional vacillation to support bold policies of intellectual liberalization. Perhaps he was convinced that the spectacular successes of the four modernizations in the late seventies and early eighties had won the genuine support of the vast masses, thus isolating the small stratum of intellectuals and students. Perhaps he was also confident that as modernization proceeded the students themselves would be caught up in the practical tasks of modernization and the pursuit of their own careers. While it seems to be part of the current American creed that the concern for "enriching oneself" and ardor for democratic principles go hand in hand, Deng may have thought otherwise. Even

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the remarkable permissiveness and openness that has prevailed in literature, philosophy, and legal and political thought may have reflected a pragmatic disdain for the practical importance of "ideas in people's heads." This freedom helped to foster a congenial atmosphere and might do no harm.

Most recently, of course, China's economic development, despite its successes, has entered a time of troubles, and one need not deny that economic grievances and disappointed expectations have played a part in the discontents of students and intellectuals. In fact, the economic grievances and genuine political discontents seem to be totally entwined with each other. The economic development of China has shown no simple evolution from "public, planned economy" to "private market economy." Among the most aggressive entrepreneurs of the new China (some are involved with the world economy) are former cadres and relatives of cadres and even military men, who use their political leverage to launch new enterprises, which, while operating in the market, are not really part of any sharply demarcated private sector. In the eyes of intellectuals who live in the grossly underfunded educational-cultural sector, these new "bureaucratic capitalists" represent a source of gross corruption, inequity, and hypocrisy. Many of these students and intellectuals who in fact claim to be ardent supporters of the "free enterprise" system find the combination of unbridled political power with the avid pursuit of private wealth unacceptable. Here, their attitudes resonate with a long tradition of Confucian moralism that always thundered against public officials who used their power for private gain while hypocritically mouthing the pieties of Confucian ethics; and at the same time, these attitudes make them deeply appreciative of that aspect of Western constitutional democracy that maintains that the corruptions and fallibilities of the political elite can only be tamed by subjugating their power to the constraints of constitutional rules and controls. Contrary to the usual facile assertions that Chinese cannot understand democracy, some of the Chinese students I know understand these notions quite clearly. This does not, of course, mean that the students in Tienanman Square had any idea of how to realize such democracy within the present framework of power.

The discussion of democracy in the Chinese intellectual media has grown in strength since the beginning of the year. Meanwhile, China's economic problems have not abated. Even the students and intellectuals do not believe that all the problems are simply due to corruption, but there has been an equal lack of faith that the highest decision makers possess any higher wisdom in these matters. It is also important to note that the year 1989 marks the seventieth anniversary of the famous student uprising of May 4, 1919—an event that many were now prepared to interpret in a way entirely hostile to the official interpretation. A very common view is that what seemed like a promising turn to "democracy and enlightenment" in the May 4th movement was then derailed by the false promise of Marxism-Leninism. One thus had reason to expect trouble as May 4th approached.

All of this taken together with calls for the release of the "democratic wall" hero Wei Ching-sheng, the prolonged occupation of the sacred site Tiananmen, and the insulting challenges to the top leadership, no doubt began to loom in Deng's eyes as an unacceptable threat to the principle of party transcendence, which he had never for a moment abandoned. His speech of April 26, which we received very late, establishes all the premises for the crackdown of June 4. The preservation of supreme party authority and prestige, we are told, is an imperative that transcends all foreign and domestic opinion and that may even involve bloodshed. It is not a question of whether students can topple the government. China, unlike Poland, does not have to contend with the Catholic church and Solidarity—only with a group of students and intellectuals "who can be dealt with." However, one must deal with them since they are systematically attempting to undermine party authority.

If the premises for the crackdown were present, at least in Deng's mind, on April 26, one may ask why the final act did not occur until June 4. There were, of course, large parts of the government and party establishment that obviously did not share his premises, including the vacillating Zhao Ziyang. Deng and his

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elderly cohorts clearly mistrusted the "deliberative" bodies of the government and party. There was already the hint in the April 26th statement that in the end the army might have to play a crucial role. Despite Deng's statements of April 26, many seriously doubted whether a disdain for "foreign opinion" would be compatible with an "open door" policy. Yet as May moved on there were further, even greater, challenges to the four principles. It appeared that most of the urban masses were prepared to express solidarity with the students, and after the declaration of martial law it even became evident that there were signs of softness in the armed forces.

From the point of view of Deng and his aged colleagues there was now a clear and present danger to the entire mystique of party authority. Could the students have been handled otherwise? No doubt this was possible. The Gorbachev of 1989 might have handled it differently. In the universe of Deng Xiaoping, however, whose entire life is coterminous with the history of the Chinese Communist party, the decision to preserve the notion of party authority at whatever cost was a thoroughly pragmatic decision. The alternative, in this view, was anarchy.

Were the "China watchers" incapable of predicting the crackdown? In fact the possibility was widely discussed but tended to be regarded as unlikely because of its presumed prohibitive costs. During the last ten years, the "rational-development model" has again become ever more plausible. Many have been able to observe on the spot the results of new policies in agriculture, industry, culture, and in China's increasing involvement with the world economy and foreign societies. While many have been critical, even pessimistic, about many policies and while it is by no means clear that anyone (including foreign experts) has easy solutions for China's problems of modernization, the notion that the priority of the emphasis on modernization was now "irreversible" was almost implied by the rational development model. Within this context, Deng's "four principles" seemed to have less and less relevance.

It may indeed prove true that there are "irreversibilities" in the Chinese scene. The new leadership itself professes to believe that its policies of repression are compatible with certain irreversibilities. Deng insists again and again that the policies of "reform and the open door" are entirely compatible with the current stress on the "four principles." What was most questionable, of course, was the notion that the government had irreversibly lost both the coercive power and the will to suppress tendencies that it regarded as threats to its survival. Deng has recently even confessed his own errors in underestimating the need for "ideological and political education." Does he really believe, as Mao presumably did, that his ideology can "transform men's souls"? What he probably does believe is that it can forcibly mute the communication of dangerous ideas and create again at least the appearance of massive consensus.

It is not my contention that the various deep theories and models that we have imposed on China's episodic history in the last forty years had nothing to tell us. The totalitarian aspiration, the aims of economic development, the interplay with the culture of the past, the silent weight of demography, the role of nationalism, the ideology and the concept of the party, and other factors have all entered into the complex drama of the history of contemporary China. Yet, if we must have a "framework," I would precisely recommend the metaphor of an unfolding and unresolved drama rather than that of all-encompassing models or "deep theories" with their claims to provide totalistic, predictive knowledge. These factors have entered the drama as conflicting themes rather than as all-embracing models. If the word "crisis" were not now a watered-down cliché, I would say that in the case of China what we have is a mammoth and sustained cultural-historical crisis involving the interaction between the society and culture of the past and claims of modernity (both of these terms themselves refer to vast and unresolved complexities). It would appear that the Communist revolution by no means ended this crisis and the Chinese (like the rest of us) will continue to grope toward their own solutions. □

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Mitchell Cohen

THE WITHERING AWAY OF A COMMUNIST STATE?

BUDAPEST

Hungary today is a land of possibilities, perils, and unpredictability. In the past year, the ruling (Communist) Hungarian Socialist Workers party (HSWP) reluctantly recognized that ineffective leadership and lack of legitimacy had rendered it increasingly incapable of coping with the country's mounting problems. Consequently, it allowed its state power to begin to wither away. Censorship is gone and the first free elections since the 1940s are planned for next year. What the party yields, it can take back, but if the current direction continues, the forty-one-year-old identity of state and ruling party will become a thing of the past.

A plethora of opposition organizations have burst into the open, ranging from protoparties and youth and environmental movements to trade unions and a Helsinki Watch affiliate. Their slogan: "Create a civil society"—a domain of public life not controlled by the state. Their goals: establish the bases for political pluralism and a market economy.

The HSWP is divided among reformers, centrists, and Marxist-Leninist "fundamentalists." The "Reform Circles," initiated in the fall of 1988, advocate multiparty democracy and a market economy. In public meetings last spring, they called for their country's "democratic socialist transformation," its neutrality, and the ouster of Károly Grosz. The latter, a stumbling centrist, became the party's secretary-general in May 1988, displacing János Kádár, Hungary's chief since his betrayal of the 1956 revolution. Reformers also demanded the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy, the reform Communist premier executed for his role in the 1956 revolution.

After intense speculation about a possible party split, the reformers gained ground in early summer. The Central Committee curtailed Grosz's powers by placing him in a presidium headed by Rezsö Nyers, author of Hungary's 1968 market-oriented reforms. The other members are reform-minded Premier Miklós Németh and Imre Pozsgay, a radical reformer. Nyers was named party president and Pozsgay, the nation's most popular politician, became the party's candidate for president under a proposed revised constitution.

It appears that parties will compete openly in all constituencies in parliamentary elections, unlike the June balloting in Poland where a percentage was guaranteed to the Communists. Reformers are proponents of a dramatically altered HSWP, willing to play by democratic rules and step aside if defeated. An HSWP congress in October will debate far-reaching changes in party structure. According to György Kerekes, a member of the organizing committee of the Budapest Reform Circle, his comrades aim to end "democratic centralism."

Hardly Leninism. But it was not orthodox Leninism that ruled post-1956 Hungary. Kádár, who died in July, was given considerable leeway by Moscow because he made it clear that he would be the Kremlin's obedient servant. By the Gorbachev era, however, the system he fashioned was in trouble. It rested on the ruling party's ability to deliver rising living

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standards. Kádár was not Big Brother as much as a relatively liberal Little Father, feeding the family, which, for its part, was expected to behave. "Whoever isn't against us, is for us," he declared in 1962, reversing the formula traditional to totalitarian systems. "Goulash Communism" worked for a good many years but was undone by deepening economic malaise. A sign of the new times: In June 1987, a group of opposition intellectuals published "Social Contract," a program whose title conveyed a demand for a democratic politics based on citizen participation, not acquiescence to Kádár's "consensus."

Two years later, Kádár was out, his successor in trouble, and on June 16, 1989, the thirty-first anniversary of the execution of Nagy and his comrades, two hundred and fifty thousand people, including leading HSWP reformers, attended their ceremonial reburial. Earlier that week Hungarians watched negotiations between the government and the opposition on live television. In Budapest's bookstores they could find, prominently displayed, the Hungarian translations of Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm* along with works by once-banned Hungarian authors like György Konrad.

Reformers, Fundamentalists, Opportunists

Imre Pozsgay increasingly presents himself as a social democrat. A substantive article he published in March in *Marczius Tizenotodike* denounces, without qualification, the idea that political freedom should be sacrificed for the sake of a future, more "complete form of human freedom." Moreover,

> The true custodian of political freedom is the citizen, its framework is the nation, and its means is the state. Behind all this lies the organic system of society in which the individual is capable of self-determination and the collective is able to govern itself. The manner in which the state's tasks are performed, the qualities of the services it provides, are controlled directly by the citizens or their representatives.

This is not enough. A civil (or "civic") society apart from the state is required:

> For potential freedom to become real freedom, property reforms must be accompanied by the emergence of a private or communal form of proprietary self-pride that will spur sovereign citizens on to restoring their civic society, thereby making it possible for genuine pluralism to thrive and political battles to be fought. . . .

Pozsgay attacks the "Stalinist" vanguard party for absorbing the economy into politics and politics "into a bureaucratic party state" that controlled "every manifestation of its citizens." Striking a populist note, he insists that all achievements during the past four decades were due to "unique Hungarian characteristics" and the rejection of "alien" Stalinism.

Hungary's economic crisis is one reason why economist Reszö Nyers stepped to the fore. Nyers began his career in the Hungarian Social Democratic party, which was forcibly merged with the Communists in the late 1940s, and there is a competition between him and Pozsgay. He declares himself "close to the ideas of Austro-Marxism," and advocates a "socialist version of 'social market economy.' "

Nyers rose to prominence as the architect of the "New Economic Mechanism" (NEM) of 1968, which trimmed central planning, transferred many management prerogatives from state organs to the enterprises themselves, and introduced market forces in determining prices for about half the economy. The Prague Spring made it an inauspicious year for economic reform in Budapest. Still, it survived until 1972, when Moscow's desire for increased "coordination" of its bloc and discontent among workers adversely affected by market reforms led to retrenchment. Nyers fell along with the NEM. Although new reforms were later introduced, he did not regain a seat in the Politburo until 1988.

"In their economic ideas," claims Kerekes, "party reformers are much closer to [opposition groups like] the Association of Free Democrats, the Democratic Forum, and the Social Democrats, than to party conservatives." Marxist-Leninist "fundamentalists" have suffered setbacks recently, but they remain a force. The HSWP's "Marxist Unity Platform" group denounces liberalization on behalf of "order" and attacks "selling-out" to the West. It has a potential ally in the neo-Stalinist "Ferenc Münnich Society," which claims

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twelve thousand members and is named for the minister who helped "clean house" after 1956. As György Konrad notes, "Pozsgay's advantage is the party he is in; it is also his disadvantage."

The Ferenc Münnich Society has significant influence in the 60,000-strong "Worker's Militia," a paramilitary organization tied to the party, and apparently in the Interior Ministry. Since some estimates place 140,000 arms in private hands in Hungary, some left over from 1956, the failure of reform could potentially bring bloodshed in its wake. Not long ago an unofficial journal ran a satirical ad for the "clothing store" of the Ferenc Münnich Society, where one could buy "used truncheons and leather padded jackets." Neo-Stalinists have their own jokes: "Q: Why did Pozsgay want Nagy's rehabilitation? A: Because he needs a place in Plot 301"—where the bodies of Nagy and his associates were dumped following their executions in 1958.

In the meantime, party hierarchs and technicians of the *ancien régime* are positioning themselves to be the economic and managerial elites in a reformed Hungary. Commercial banks, both Hungarian and foreign, are preparing to give individual loans for their purchase of shares in privatizing companies. High party officials began sending their children to foreign business schools some years ago. At least something has been learned from Karl Marx: Ruling classes must reproduce themselves.

Struggling Democrats

The democratic opposition to the regime has been spearheaded by the Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Free Democrats. These protoparties work together for democratic goals, although their orientations differ and they will be electoral competitors. Neither has mass bases today.

The Forum was initiated by populist writers in September 1987, and has about sixteen thousand members. Its purpose, says Géza Jeszenszky, a historian who sits on its Executive, is to unite three tendencies that were eliminated by Stalinist rule: agrarian and peasant interests, non-Marxist and nonradical professionals, and Christian Democrats. The Forum is composed mainly of the country intelligentsia, whereas the Free Democrats, with about four thousand members, tend to be urban, and particularly Budapest-based, intellectuals with a coherent liberal, as opposed to populist, worldview. There are many Jews among the Free Democrats, and allegations of anti-Semitism within a segment of the Forum's leadership has been a source of friction between the two groups.

Both organizations oppose centrally planned economies. There is, however, some disputation in the Forum between proponents of populist and advocates of free-market policies. Also debated is the idea of a "Hungarian Third Road," one that would follow neither the communist East nor the capitalist West. The Free Democrats, with a Western orientation, embrace a liberalism that would place them somewhere between the Free Democrats and Social Democrats in West Germany, according to sociologist Bálint Magyar, a leading activist. In his view, Hungary's immediate economic problems require liberal rather than social democratic responses. "In France," he comments, "the word 'socialist' in a party name is no problem; here it is a synonym for bastard." (*Alas! A posthumous victory for Stalin!*)

The Forum and the Free Democrats differ on relations with HSWP Reformers and/or a reformed HSWP. Polls indicate the HSWP will emerge as the largest party in free elections, although with only 30–35 percent of the vote; partners will be required to form a cabinet. The Forum favors participation and has had contacts with Pozsgay since its founding. "The Reform Communists," Jeszenszky says, "are not really Communists and it would be a mistake to leave the government entirely in HSWP hands." The Free Democrats have, with some exceptions, opposed joining a coalition. Magyar argues against it on grounds of democratic practice: "The consolidation of a democratic system requires both an elected government and a parliamentary opposition. The Free Democrats should be an articulate opposition party."

A striking perspective on mistrust of the HSWP—including its reformers—is presented by playwright István Eörsi, a former student of Georg Lukács. Unlike the liberal mainstream

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Summer 1989: Bookstore window in Budapest.

of the Free Democrats, he is a socialist—the Free Democrats contain socialist and Green factions—who advocates a "socialist market economy." He is not opposed in principle to joining a governing coalition with HSWP Reformers, but when asked why, with his left-wing politics, he works not with them but with the Free Democrats, he says,

> I once wrote poems to Stalin and Rakosi. Then came 1956; it was the transforming experience of a lifetime. I spent four years in prison afterward. While I feel an ideological commonality with people like Pozsgay, the moral-historical question is crucial to me. Nyers was in the Central Committee when Nagy was executed. I like many of his ideas today, but I'm forced to be suspicious. When Pozsgay was Minister of Culture, he proposed that my emigration could be arranged. Imagine! A Culture Minister suggests to a writer that he leave the country!
>
> . . . In the end, I'd rather be comrades with people I trust but don't agree with entirely—we can argue—than with people to whom I'm ideologically close but can't trust. Perhaps it sounds dramatic, but the key for me is whether I could live in a prison cell with someone.

"Nostalgic" Parties: Smallholders and Social Democrats

Parties that played significant roles before 1948, and were eliminated by Stalinism, are reconstituting themselves. The two most important of these "nostalgic parties" are the Smallholders, founded in 1930 and recipient of 57 percent of the vote in the 1945 elections, and the Social Democrats. The orientation of the Smallholders is similar to that of the Democratic Forum, but Péter Hardi, its deputy secretary-general, views the Forum, and also the Free Democrats, as too dominated by intellectuals and unable to address "the working masses." The Smallholders, who themselves claim only about six thousand members, want to represent the countryside. However, the face of rural Hungary has changed dramatically after forty years of Communist rule, and so too have the party's old social bases. Hardi, a twenty-eight-year-old pastor of the Reform Church, calls for a restructuring of the agricultural system, "which was forced on the peasants," and significant expansion of health and educational programs for residents of the countryside.

The Social Democrats are potentially a force of great significance since they both could compete with the HSWP for working-class allegiance and might serve in a coalition government with Reformers. Szilárd Nyakas, a journalist and one of the new generation of Social Democrats, comments that "today, the Hungarian working class is waiting. It believes nobody. It has no Lech Walesa, and when workers look at the HSWP they say: this party ruled in our name, but without us."

The Social Democratic party reappeared for the one week during the 1956 revolution in which parties were legal. In late 1988 András Révész, the party's deputy secretary-general for that week, surfaced on a Budapest radio program to declare that he wanted the movement organized anew. Former members visited him shortly thereafter, and on January 9, 1989 it was decided to resurrect Hungarian Social

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Democracy. Révész, a charismatic octogenarian, became president, and Social Democrats have been attending meetings of the Socialist International. A draft program circulated under Révész's name called for parliamentary democracy, guaranteed human rights, a neutral Hungary, and a mixed economy "in which priority is given to free enterprise and market economics," but in which the state has the "duty to rectify the imperfections of the market and to insure social security."

The Social Democrats are beset by material problems. Their journal *Népszava* (Voice of the People) was taken over by the official trade unions in 1948. A new version, using the same name but declaring itself Social Democratic on the masthead, appeared under Nyakas's editorship with a two-thousand-copy run in May.

The most serious difficulty faced by Social Democrats is bitter internal squabbling—political, personal, and generational. A month after the party's re-formation, it appeared that an important political scientist, Mihály Bihari, would become secretary-general. Bihari, an associate of Pozsgay who was expelled from the HSWP last year for his reformism, had traveled in Democratic Forum circles too. A series of clashes, partly over whether Bihari had truly become a social democrat, led to his exit. (He is now turning back toward the HSWP Reformers.)

The party has been debating—sometimes acrimoniously—what it means to be a Hungarian Social Democrat today. Should the HSWP declare itself "social democratic," the Hungarian Social Democratic party will face an especially difficult challenge of self-definition. Some older members want to re-create a working-class party, while Révész and the younger generation want something broader, "a people's party, like Brandt and Schmidt tried to build" in Germany. "Its a new world," says György Ruttner, a party spokesman, "and part of the old guard, having been unable to engage in politics for forty years, is having trouble adjusting." The old guard apparently thinks the younger generation, having grown up under HSWP rule, is untutored in Social Democracy. Révész, though eighty years old and ill, tries to be a bridge by advocating a broader party and urging that young Social Democrats be sent to Western Europe to learn from sister parties there. A July conference with representatives from eighteen of Hungary's nineteen counties gave the party new momentum, in preparation for a national congress in the fall. It appears, however, that factionalism will remain a serious problem in the foreseeable future.

Youth, Trade Unionists, Ecologists

Among the new actors on the Hungarian stage is the League of Young Democrats, which declares itself "a voice of the small awakening civil society in Hungary, one of the many 'small circles of liberty'"—the latter phrase coming from István Bibo (1911–1979), a left-leaning liberal populist whose ideas inspire many Hungarian democrats. The League, founded in March 1988, was beleaguered initially by the state security apparatus because of its demonstrations and educational work on behalf of liberal ideas. It is known by its Hungarian acronym, FIDESZ, chosen for its correspondence with *fides*—"Fidelity to the ideas of democracy, civil liberties and human rights." FIDESZ competes with the official Communist youth organization and champions "the elimination of military alliances [and] the re-establishment of the cultural and political unity" of Europe. It is planning to run in next year's elections and sent observers to the Polish elections. Following the massacre of the democratic student movement in Beijing, FIDESZ organized protests outside the Chinese embassy in Budapest.

Though not as visible as FIDESZ, the emergence of independent trade unions is another important development. In May 1988 the Democratic Union of Scientific Workers (TDDSZ) was formed by scholars and workers in cultural, research, and public institutions. Since its establishment, six additional independent unions have appeared. In contrast to Poland, where the regime's foes were concentrated in a mass workers' movement with a charismatic leader, the Hungarian unions are small and largely white-collar, although a blue-collar effort, named "Solidarity," began to operate in Spring 1989.

Forming TDDSZ, which now has about four

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thousand members, was a political act; "official" trade unions have existed for the last forty years as "transmission belts" for the ruling party. The independent unions have pushed the official unions into acting more like unions, instead of transmission belts. Since Hungary's economic issues are bound to political ones, TDDSZ fights for its members' needs—higher salaries, research funds, and so on—but also joins the opposition's efforts to promote democratic reform and a market economy.

Environmental activism has also started in Hungary. Stalinism's stress on rapid economic development, especially of heavy industry, engendered blindness to environmental issues. Ecology "was viewed as 'bourgeois,' " notes the country's leading "Green" activist, János Vargha. The result: "We are missing at least two generations of ecologists."

The most publicized ecological struggle has been over the building of the Gagcikovo-Nagymaros twin hydroelectric dams on the Danube, on both sides of the Czech-Hungarian boarder. The "Danube Circle," founded by Vargha in 1984, maintained that the dams were ecologically dangerous—threatening drinking water reserves and important Wetland forests, as well as posing a potentially serious flood risk for southern Slovakia—and economically unsound. A battle was waged with public activities and *samizdat* publications. One hundred and fifty thousand Hungarians signed petitions calling for a referendum on the dam, and finally, in May 1989, work on the Hungarian side was partially suspended with the backing of HSWP Reformers. Varghas argues that in the future, ecological issues will depend on "the reconstruction of Hungarian civil society so that we have political and social pluralism."

"We are moving and thinking in a dark room and we don't know where the walls are," says Tamás Zala, editor of the *Hungarian Observer*. "We know we want to go out, but we don't know exactly where the door is." The pace of events within Hungary is astonishing, but they are ultimately dependent on external factors—Moscow and Washington. One of the most startling aspects of political discourse in Budapest today is open discussion of a Hungarian departure from the Warsaw Pact.

Signals from Moscow have been mixed. In July Gorbachev declared that how Poles and Hungarians "structure their societies will be their affair." A quarter of the sixty thousand Soviet troops now on Hungarian soil are scheduled to leave soon. But Gorbachev also warned against expectations that Eastern Europe would "return to the capitalist fold" and earlier in the year he apparently told Grosz that everything is permissible save leaving the Warsaw Pact and ending the "leading role" of the party. The latter can be fudged if Pozsgay is elected president as a Communist, and then constructs a multiparty—but not necessarily Communist-dominated—government.

Exiting the military alliance is another matter. The decision to do so is generally presumed to be what triggered the Soviet invasion in 1956. Unforeseeable circumstances could curtail Gorbachev's largess, or his term of office. Also to be considered is increasing agitation among conservative Communist signatories of the Pact—East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania—who fear that reformist viruses can cross frontiers. Bucharest is bristling because of criticism of its treatment of its Magyar minority. The Czechs are furious about the dam controversy and recent Hungarian TV interviews with Alexander Dubcek, the leader of the Prague Spring, and dissident Czech playwright Vaclav Havel. When the HSWP criticized Hungary's participation in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, Prague accused Budapest of interfering in Czech internal affairs (which, presumably, the invasion itself did not). Since Budapest began dismantling its barbed-wire "iron curtain" with Austria recently, Hungary has become an escape route to the West for East German citizens, to their government's great chagrin.

An outsider is tempted to wonder if talk of leaving the Warsaw Pact isn't reckless. Practical political wisdom would seem to make Hungary's democratization, not the Warsaw Pact, the priority. Even Mark Palmer, the astute (and popular) American ambassador to Budapest, expresses concern that this matter is not always kept in perspective by oppositionists (with whom he has an amicable relationship).

György Konrad suggests looking to history for ideas for the future. In the Austro-

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Hungarian "Compromise of 1867"—nineteen years after Lajos Kossuth's Hungarian Republic was thwarted by Vienna (with the help of Russian troops)—Emperor Franz Josef gave Hungary almost complete self-rule. Something reminiscent might emerge in the 1990s with a reformed Communist—Pozsgay—as president and a democratically elected government running the nation's affairs. Konrad contends that a Hungarian exit from the Warsaw Pact depends on fundamental changes in the bloc system as a whole, which, in turn, are dependent on what the United States is willing to do. "When people like Kissinger and Brzezinski propose declaring that the U.S. won't go into Hungary if Moscow pulls out, they are advocating a hypocritical policy," he says. "They want something for nothing. If the U.S. wants the USSR out of Hungary so that democracy can flourish here, it must be willing to pay a price, say, a reciprocal move such as an American pullout from Greece or Italy."

An argument for remaining in the Pact, at least for now, is made by the Democratic Front's Jeszenszky—for Hungarian national reasons. Hungary is a relatively small military power, he notes. Leaving the alliance creates the possibility of a "mini-entente" of disgruntled conservative Communist states against Hungary, something Moscow would not countenance if Budapest remained a member.

Domestic hazards complement foreign ones. No one, save neo-Stalinists, thinks a command economy makes sense for Hungary (or anywhere else). There is, however, a potentially dangerous tendency among reformers and democrats to speak of "the market" as if it were magic. Social dislocations, unemployment, and inflation are likely to accompany a transition to a market economy. Economic historian István Rev expresses concern that discussions of economic reform have paid insufficient attention to its negative side effects, which could carry political consequences. The current mood among some oppositionists mitigates against talk of social problems because it "sounds too left-leaning."

Past market reforms have led to discontent among adversely affected workers. Mihály Bihari estimates that during a transition to a market economy, a Hungarian government could deal with a rise from the current 20 percent inflation rate to one of 60–70 percent. More could bring serious unrest. Similarly, he thinks that the number of unemployed—currently estimated at fifteen to twenty thousand out of a workforce of approximately four and one half million—would be manageable if it went up to about one hundred thousand, but not if it climbed toward 10 percent or more (four hundred thousand).

The HSWP was forced into change because, lacking legitimacy, it could not ask major sacrifices of the population. Pozsgay and Nyers may be able to do so. However, the unspoken premise of most economic reformers seems to be that very substantial Western aid and investment must ease economic transformation. Last spring the relatively conservative Grosz spoke of eight billion dollars in foreign capital needed during the next half decade to begin modernizing the economy. Such expectations may be unrealistic. The great tragedy, Nyers told an Austrian newspaper last spring, is that "reformers always get to power when the situation is messed up."

The threat facing any reformist government will be disgruntled Leninist fundamentalists demagogically telling a socially distressed working population: "All this talk of constitutional democracy, free speech, and markets may be in the interests of their proponents, but when people like us have power, your factories aren't closed because of subsidy cuts, inflation is lower, and things are in order."

For fundamentalists, fundamentals can't be disproved; hence their danger. Pluralism is almost conceptually impossible if one claims to be the political embodiment of *the* science of society; it is akin to accepting competition between, say, a brain surgeon and witch doctors. By permitting a "civil society" to emerge, however reluctantly, the HSWP revealed that this fundamental of Leninism has run aground. Consequently, Hungary now searches for a pluralist—and multiparty—formula for its future. Finding it requires the HSWP to yield its role, not just past theoretical pretenses. □

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Glasnost Watch

Alec Nove

THE PROBLEMS OF PERESTROIKA

Portrait of an Economy in Transition

This essay examines three broad questions: First, what part—and how much—of the Soviet economy is in need of reform; second, what kind of reforms have been proposed; and third, are the projected reforms viable and will they work when (and if) they are implemented. In addition, I shall examine previous attempts to restructure the Soviet economic system and also—especially in the light of past experience—the problems and difficulties the reformers must contend with.

Anatomy of a (Pre?)Crisis

That the Soviet economy is in a deplorable state has now been fully acknowledged by Soviet economists and Soviet political leaders. Perennial shortages, declining growth, staggering waste, imbalances, stagnation, and corruption have brought it—in the words of Gorbachev himself—into "a precrisis situation." The distinguished economist Nikolai Shmelev put it bluntly in *Novy mir* (6, 1987):

> It is essential to realize that the cause of our difficulties is not only or solely due to the heavy burden of military expenditures and to the highly expensive global responsibilities assumed by our country. . . . Persistent, long-term efforts to defy the objective laws of economic life and to suppress the age-long natural incentives to work have led to results directly opposite to those we had anticipated. We now have an economy that is out of balance and plagued with shortages, an economy which rejects scientific and technical progress, which is unplanned and—if we want to be totally honest—unplannable. . . .
>
> Massive apathy, indifference, theft and disrespect for honest labor together with aggressive envy toward those who earn more—even by honest methods—have led to the virtual physical degradation of a significant part of the people as a result of alcoholism and idleness. There is a lack of belief in the officially announced objectives and purposes, in the very possibility of a more rational organization of social and economic life. . . .
>
> Clearly all this cannot be swiftly overcome—it will take years, perhaps several generations [to bring it about].

Since the publication of Shmelev's article even more serious indictments have appeared in the Soviet press. According to many writers, the country's economy is not merely in a state of a "pre-crisis" but of a full-fledged "crisis." Indeed, the situation has deteriorated, as can be seen in the alarm expressed by E. Gaidar in his analysis of the economic year 1988 in *Kommunist,* No. 2, 1989 and in numerous articles by Leonid Abalkin, the influential director of the Institute of Economics.

Even these few examples should suffice to illustrate why the new Soviet leadership has embarked on a process of change. But why now? After all, none of the problems aired in the Soviet press and in speeches of the leaders is exactly new. Many had been plainly visible even prior to World War II, and had in fact been subject to criticism before. The answers to

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this question must be divided into two parts: those relating to the long-term evolution of the Soviet economic system and those arising from specific malfunctions, some of fairly recent origin.

The fundamental cause of the malaise lies in the very nature of the centralized command-economy model, which Gavril Popov, recently appointed editor in chief of the monthly *Voprosy ekonomiki* (*Problems of Economics*) called, in a seminal article in *Nauka i Zhizn* (*Science and Life*, 4, 1987), "The Administrative System." The system had come into being under Stalin and its overriding purpose was to mobilize all material and human resources for the political priorities set by the state. Since the priorities were few in number, since they were all in effect determined by the supreme despot, and since, furthermore, they relied (in Popov's words) on a "sub-system of fear" (that is, terror) and on devoted agents to carry out the policies, the system produced results, at least in the short run. Thus, Stalin did succeed—at a hideous cost—in industrializing the country and in creating a military-industrial complex.

However, as Popov emphasizes, even those early successes were seriously marred by losses and inefficiencies, caused by the stifling of initiative and overcentralization. As the economy continued to grow, as the tasks set by the planners became ever more numerous and complex, the losses and inefficiencies multiplied, eventually overwhelming the planning and control apparatus. The assumption that the central authorities knew what was best for society proved a sham. Moreover, the power of the authorities to issue instructions ("plan-orders") to hundreds of thousands of enterprise managements throughout the country no longer worked. The planning apparatus was forced to splinter, many of its parts working at cross purposes.

Instead of centralized and coordinated control, the system yielded gradually to what became known as "departmentalism" and "localism." The millions of bureaucrats employed by the central planning agencies still continued to determine everything from the number of nails to distribution of women's shoes, but more often than not the results bore little relation to the plans. Neither the quantity nor the quality of the goods (especially in the consumer sector) conformed to market demands and to the growing aspirations of the Soviet public.

Popov makes another crucial point: The supreme despot is gone. Terror is no more. Advances in technology require increasingly complex and variegated solutions. The old breed of faithful servants degenerated and corruption spread.

The problem of the magnitude of the new tasks may be illustrated by a quip made some time ago by Academician Nikolai Fedorenko to the effect that a fully balanced, fully checked and detailed plan for the year ahead would be ready, with the help of computers, in roughly thirty thousand years' time. There are millions of product variants. There are hundreds of thousands of enterprises in industry, agriculture, construction, transport, and distribution. It is necessary to make thousands of millions of decisions in the area of supply alone. The plans must also relate to labor, wages, costs, profits, investments, and economy of materials. They emerge from different parts of the planning hierarchy. They are all too often inconsistent with each other, as for instance when supplies do not match the output plan. Because next year's plan must be ready by next year, and not in 29,999 years, it is inevitably neither balanced, checked, nor disaggregated. It is, in effect, not a plan in any meaningful sense of the term.

Fedorenko's is more than a quip: It rests on a massive literature available to anyone within and outside of the USSR. Plans in rubles of turnover encourage the use of expensive inputs and discourage the production of cheaper models. Plans in tons penalize economy of metals and reward heavy products. In road transport, plans in ton-kilometers reward those who succeed in transporting the heaviest goods for the longest distances. Until now, construction enterprises had been working to plans expressed in rubles *spent*, and their wage bills are still calculated as a percentage of this, so that cheaper construction actually penalized both management and labor.

Furthermore, under those conditions techni-

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cal progress is in effect discouraged, partly because there is no reward for risk-taking and partly because the material means and investment financing are tightly controlled from above, thus allowing for no initiative from below. Finally, with fulfillment of the plan having been made the primary criterion for success, managers, anxious above all else to have their plans fulfilled, have regularly understated their production possibilities in order to keep some capacity in reserve for contingencies. In turn, the constant worry about supplies caused not only the overapplication for materials, but also large-scale hoarding. Within such a system, the needs of the customer had little or no influence on what was being produced.

Some Soviet critics have also pointed out the misleading nature of the output statistics: For instance, the USSR produces eight times more combine-harvesters than does the United States but a large proportion of these harvesters are always out of action for lack of spare parts and proper maintenance. In this and other cases it would make economic sense to produce less, but what with the relevant ministry chasing growth targets, production stays high, regardless of need and quality.

This growth for growth's sake, says Shmelev in another article, make no sense. Other economists have said much the same thing. Shortages, they assert, coexist with overproduction of what is not needed. The completion of investments is often delayed by an excessive and simultaneously pursued number of projects: as many as "three hundred and fifty thousand production investment projects" are already in hand, says Gaider.

It may be objected that this picture is too negative or one-sided. Even if each of these defects can be illustrated by literally dozens of quotations from Soviet sources, a critic might say, the economy still continued to grow, the wheels kept turning. There are several explanations. Planning worked in those sectors to which the state gave priority and whose needs could be easily quantified. This applied first and foremost to armaments, but also to electrical energy, where the product is homogeneous and thus readily "plannable." It also applied to oil and gas production and to the construction of a network of pipelines: In each of these fields, the Soviet system had scored impressive achievements.

Second, plans are not made on a blank sheet of paper. Those involved in the process know what they did the year before and assume (usually correctly) that they will draw supplies from the same sources and will be asked to produce more or less the same things, probably a little more this time around. This "planning from the achieved level," as it has come to be called, is now being criticized for its manifest flaws, but it helps to explain why the wheels did turn. To this must be added a complex network of unofficial relations among the parts of the economy, some of which are corrupt, and others of which take the form of mutual aid. For example, a manager who has succeeded in hoarding excess stocks of metal sheets might arrange to barter them, in exchange for caustic soda or wooden logs or whatever he happens to need, outside of the formal allocation network.

The basic criticism to be leveled against this system is that it has come into contradiction with the requirements of a modern industrial economy and with a society with rising living standards and even more so with rising expectations. To take two examples: Few Soviet citizens had been concerned about repair facilities for consumer durables until these became widely available, as they are now. And many Soviet citizens had learned to accept the appalling lack of decent housing until the mid-1950s, when Khrushchev began to turn his attention to this problem. Housing construction accelerated in the 1960s but slowed under Brezhnev. Gorbachev has promised a separate house or apartment for every family by the year 2000, and housing as well as schools and the seriously neglected hospitals are receiving higher priority today. The new goals are clearly a response to popular demand, voiced with increased stridency in the press and—as the electoral campaign in early 1989 illustrated—at public gatherings.

These, then, are the long-term and fundamen-

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tal reasons for a change of the system. What about the short-term causes of the "pre-crisis" (or "crisis") situation? One was demographic: the extremely slow rise in the numbers of the working population meant that growth now depended almost wholly on increases in labor productivity. Another related to agriculture: Especially in the 1970s, huge investments and subsidies had been poured into the countryside, with very little effect. In fact, it proved necessary to mobilize additional millions of workers, students, and soldiers to help with the harvesting. Space does not permit an analysis of the causes of the agricultural imbroglio, but suffice it to say that its burden on the rest of the economy contributed to the overstrain and slowdown of the entire economic system.

Yet another factor is the arms burden. Its actual magnitude is not known, since the official statistics conceal it. This has now been admitted by Soviet officials and it is likely that we shall soon get the real figures. But clearly the effort to achieve and maintain parity with the much richer United States has been very costly, with scarce skills and equipment having been diverted into these unproductive channels.

The gradual exhaustion of readily accessible raw materials and fuels, necessitating larger investments in remote areas, especially in Siberia, has been one more factor contributing to the relentless decline of the economy. The decision to invest in energy in remote areas was rational, but enormously expensive. However, the Baikal-Amur railroad project is now seen as wasteful.

Nor did the policies pursued by the Brezhnev regime bring any succor. In fact, it was under his reign that corruption spread into the party and state regime, to a degree unparalleled in the history of the USSR. Brezhnev and his colleagues duly acknowledged that the economy was not functioning well and even introduced some reforms. However, the latter were always described as "the further perfecting" of the existing system (though it's hard to see how anything "perfect" can be made even "more perfect"); its major features were left intact. And so the measures failed to make any significant impact.

All told, then, the economy on the eve of Gorbachev's assumption of power was full of the most alarming defects and shortcomings. There was a clear need for decisive measures to increase efficiency and accelerate the diffusion of technology, eliminate waste, and bring about higher labor productivity and a closer adjustment of output to the needs of the economy and of the consumer.

For reasons set out above, the system had proved incapable of meeting these needs. Only a "radical reform" could turn the situation around. And in view of the widespread passivity and indifference, the problem was not only economic. The three concepts proclaimed by the new leadership—*glasnost, perestroika,* and *demokratizatsiia*—were emblematic of the profound changes that were to be introduced in all areas of Soviet life. All three were interlinked, each one important by itself and each essential to the other. There was to be no more talk about "perfecting the existing system." The system itself would have to be changed.

The Past: Tinkering with the System

Before turning to the proposed reform program, let us take a look at past attempts to cure some of the enduring ills of the Soviet economic system. Some of them had been diagnosed in the 1950s. One of my own first articles on this subject, in 1958, was filled with examples, culled from the Soviet press, of waste and distortions due to plans expressed in gross value rubles and tons, and other such practices. Measures to reform Stalinist agricultural policies were adopted as early as September 1953, and industrial planning was the subject of a decree in 1955.

Indeed, the Khrushchev era (1956–1964) saw a number of bold attempts to tackle the afflictions of the "Administrative System." Under the protective wing of V. Nemchinov, an economist in good standing with the party leadership, the reformist economist Yevsei Liberman published several critical articles, and during this period, too, Viktor Novozhilov and Leonid Kantorovich were allowed to publish ideas on optimal planning involving mathematical methods, which had been proscribed hitherto. In fact, Nemchinov, Novozhilov, and Kantorovich shared the Lenin prize in

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1964, and the 1965 reform measures reflected some of Liberman's ideas—this, even though Khrushchev had already fallen.

However, while greater freedom of expression gave several reforming economists an opportunity to advocate new ideas, the centralized planning system remained impervious to authentically radical change. The reform decree of 1965 also reconstituted the economic ministries, which Khrushchev had abolished in 1957. These ministries were now made responsible for the performance of "their" enterprises and, despite references in the decree to managerial autonomy and to a reduction in the number of compulsory plan indicators, plan-orders from above continued to rule the system. In 1967, the price "reform" still left prices based almost exclusively on cost-plus (though the "plus" now included a capital charge), and neither in theory nor in practice did they incorporate supply-and-demand conditions or value-in-use.

To be sure, there were some attempts not only to "perfect" but to change certain features of the system. But all of them were little more than variations on a centralizing theme, and did nothing to alter the planning mechanism. For example, an attempt was made to introduce "normed value-added" as an indicator alongside gross value of output. This was to measure the net value the given product should have. It failed. In fact, plan-indicators increased in number and the role of profit, stressed in the 1965 decree, was downgraded in 1979.

As stagnation set in, reform-minded economists tried to advocate more radical ideas. At the Siberian headquarters of the Academy of Sciences in Novosibirsk, Abel Aganbegyan and Tatiana Zaslavskaia, who subsequently became leading exponents of *perestroika,* proposed a variety of strategies. Their unpublished memoranda were leaked to the West, for which they were strongly reprimanded. In the meantime, the older generation of doctrinaire economists was passing from the scene, and with it the dogged resistance to innovation. The concept of "market socialism" was still taboo but gradually the words "socialist market" crept into the published literature.

From available fragments, it finally became possible to reconstruct a reform program not unlike that which saw the light under Gorbachev. True, for many years the program remained a consummation devoutly to be wished. Hopes were raised when Andropov succeeded the ailing Brezhnev, in 1982, but they were dashed when he was succeeded by the colorless Chernenko.

Gorbachev's speeches, therefore, as well as the measures proposed by his closest advisers, did not come exactly "out of the blue." They had a long prehistory, albeit one marked far more by failure than by success. At first, Gorbachev moved cautiously, leading some observers to conclude that he was proposing essentially yet another set of measures designed to "perfect" an unperfectible system.

Whether his ideas underwent a change when he realized the full measure of the crisis, or whether he found it politic to unveil his reform program gradually, waiting for the moment when he was strong enough to implement it, we do not know. At first his emphasis seemed to be on accelerating growth (*uskorenie*) and tighter discipline in planning of and in the future. In any case, there was no discernible blueprint; as Zaslavskaia has said, it had been no one's task to draft one. Gorbachev turned for help to a number of prominent "reform-minded" economists, but even today it cannot be said that a wholly coherent package has been presented, much less adopted.

In fact—as will be seen below—there is as of this writing no consensus as to many important elements of the reform process. Moreover, though Gorbachev tended in his speeches to align himself with the most radical critics, his actual measures, such as the Law on State Enterprises, show signs of compromise and are seen by the radicals as half-hearted and contradictory. Numerous articles and letters by managers point out that the "law" in no way protects them from arbitrary interference from ministries, which continue to impose obligatory plans upon them.

Projects and Agendas

Let me, then, turn to the reform program as it has emerged from legislation (some of it still on the drawing board), resolutions, and from speeches by Soviet leaders. What follows is

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less a description of the actual situation than one of what the reformers hope *will* take place when the measures, spelled out below, are implemented.

Though hundreds of details and legislative acts are still to be worked out, one thing seems clear: the reform "package" is intended to remedy those "systemic" deficiencies set out in the earlier part of this essay and not merely patch up the old and discredited model. Here are its basic ingredients:

First, the vast majority of enterprises are to be free to determine the bulk of their output and their product mix in negotiation with their customers or trading intermediaries. There are to be no more plans imposed in rubles, tons, meters, and so on. The exceptions will be top-priority "state orders," which will be compulsory, but these too are to generate profit for the enterprise. The success criteria and bonuses for management and workforce are to depend decisively on profits. Enterprises are to stand on their own financial feet and will no longer be able to get subsidies and soft credits. The emphasis is clearly on the role of the market.

Second—and this flows from the first principle—management is to be free to choose its own suppliers and the administered "rationing" of material inputs is to be phased out. (The traditional centralized system embodied a complex linked network of production and allocation plans.) Not being tied to a specific supplier by the plan means, and is intended to mean, competition between suppliers, with effective customer pressure to improve quality.

Third, a major price reform is plainly essential, so that what is needed is indeed profitable. Prices are to reflect not just costs but also use-value. In the more radical versions of the reform (still under discussion), most prices are to be negotiable between supplier and customer, with supply and demand playing a major role.

Fourth, a major modification in the conduct of foreign trade is under way. Until 1987, virtually all trade was channeled through the Ministry of Foreign Trade and its specialized corporations. There was virtually no connection between domestic and foreign-trade prices, and the difference, positive or negative, resulted in a profit for or a subsidy from the state budget. Soviet management was cut off from foreign markets and had neither the opportunity nor the knowledge, nor yet the material interest, to produce for export. This was one reason for the poor performance of Soviet manufacturers in world markets (the bulk of Soviet exports to the West still consists of fuel and raw materials). Now economic ministries and large enterprises are allowed to deal directly with foreign countries and are allowed to keep a proportion of the foreign currency they earn.

Another decree, published in 1987, provides for joint ventures with foreign, especially capitalist, companies, and in its latest version allows foreign capital to play a dominant role. Also under discussion is the creation of "enterprise zones," possibly in some of the Baltic republics, which are in the process of claiming a high degree of economic autonomy. Important measures affecting the labor force are also in preparation. To combat widespread apathy there are new steps to secure workers' participation in decision making, and management at various levels is to be elected by the work force. Wages are to be more closely tied to the financial performance of the enterprise and to productivity. The trade unions are to play a more active protective role. (References to strikes now occasionally appear in the Soviet press.)

A further important measure concerns cooperatives. Soviet leaders now freely admit what has long been known—namely, that collective farms (*kolkhozy*) and the cooperative trading network are cooperatives in name only. Both are integral parts of the state planning system and both have been subject to detailed orders from above. The new cooperatives, as envisioned by the Law on Cooperatives passed in 1988 and the speeches by Gorbachev and Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov, are different creatures altogether. They are projected as voluntary, genuine, free from official tutelage and control, and engaged in a wide variety of activities in competition with each other and with state enterprises, as in small-scale manufacture, services, trade, construction, even banking. As of this writing, almost one million

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people are already organized in such cooperatives.

In agriculture, the new plans call for many of the large state and collective farms to become federations of small cooperative units, with cooperative service agencies operating as subcontractors to farms. They will thus replace the monopolist (and inefficient) state-run organizations responsible, among other things, for repairs, supplies, "chemicalization," drainage, and the like. A new law allows families to lease land and livestock; the period of the lease, at first only up to five years, has now been raised to fifty years.

Less satisfactory is the legal position of private enterprises. There are restrictions on full-time private activities of persons of working age and (unlike China, Hungary and Poland, and even East Germany) no one is allowed to employ anyone outside of the narrowly defined family. Yet there is, at least on paper, a way out: A cooperative can be set up with a minimum of three persons, and it may also employ outsiders (provided it pays them at the official rate). Still, the restrictions are onerous and a serious obstacle (rooted both in ideology and vested interests) to the rational development of the Soviet economy.

Slow Pace and Dogged Resistance

On the whole, the projected reforms can certainly be characterized as radical. If and when implemented, they would not merely "perfect" the old system, but overhaul it.

But will they? Thus far, the record is a mixed one. Some reforms are yet to be enacted, some have been implemented but only partially. Gorbachev admitted as much in his speech to the Nineteenth Party Conference in June 1988, and others have been saying much the same thing—if not more. To quote the economist and director of the Institute of Economics of the USSR Academy of Science, Leonid Abalkin:

> If we were to speak of real economic successes, of the indicators of development, of the situation in the market and the shops, then, unfortunately, very little has been achieved. Is this really unexpected? In my view, it is logical. Why should things have suddenly gotten better? Have we in fact started operating all the levers and factors [of reform]? We have adopted one or two laws, taken decisions, approved various documents. But it is naive to hope that real life can be changed by decrees and regulations (*Moscow News*, June 26, 1988).

So far, key elements of the proposed changes have not been put into effect. A new pricing system is to be introduced in 1991. The practice of allocating the means of production from the top is yet to be replaced by trade and free choice of supplier, though moves by stages in that direction are announced. The current five-year plan runs through 1990 and remains in force. To ensure its fulfillment and to ensure the production of items that are not profitable in the old prices, the compulsory "state orders" (*goszakazy*), which were to have been confined to only a few super-priority items, are still applied to the bulk of industrial production. In other words, most Soviet enterprises still receive orders from above as to what to produce and for whom.

Worse still, because of the official commitment to speeding up the growth rates, the economic ministries impose targets in rubles, tons, and so on, since that is how growth is measured, rather than by orienting management to satisfy user demands. The Soviet press has been full of complaints that a multitude of obsolete and often contradictory regulations stand in the way of genuine enterprise autonomy and innovation. Similarly, despite official policy statements, including those by Gorbachev, that officials must stop interfering with the management of state and collective farms, the old practices endure. There have even been reports of local officials destroying private greenhouses for early vegetables. As one Soviet economist told me: "Unfortunately, there are millions of people in our country who prefer not to have any early vegetables rather than see their neighbor make money by growing them."

Clearly, a major reason why progress in implementing the reforms has been so disappointingly slow is that many people oppose and resent them. This has several aspects. One is a

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visceral dislike of the inequalities that flow from payment by results, from the freedom to set up cooperatives and to charge higher prices. Under conditions of chronic shortage, it is all too easy to make high profits that cause cooperatives and private activities to be seen as "speculation."

The dislike is not confined to bureaucrats; ordinary citizens are unhappy too. For instance, the long overdue efforts to bring prices into line with supply and demand, thus eliminating the onerous and wasteful practice of state subsidies, has met with massive resistance, even though Gorbachev promised to compensate for the proposed price increases with commensurate wage hikes. This reform has been postponed to avoid trouble. By the same token, the emphasis on efficiency and financial discipline, which may result in the closing of many enterprises and in redeployment of labor from overmanned to undermanned industrial sectors has frightened millions of workers. Gorbachev has sought support "from below" for his measures, but the going has not been easy. Restrictions imposed in early 1989 on cooperatives reflect not only bureaucratic prejudice but also popular resentment.

Party and state functionaries have a special reason for resisting the reforms—namely, because they regard them as a challenge to their power and privileges and, in many cases, a threat to their jobs. *Glasnost* has opened the door to spirited discussions not only about the excessive number of parasitic bureaucrats, but also about their privileges: their special shops in which goods unavailable to ordinary citizens are sold at modest prices, their own hospitals, country villas, and transport. Their salaries, now published, are not high; hence the value they set on the privileges.

In a revealing interview, the economist Abel Abeganyan, one of Gorbachev's closest advisers, cited a "high Soviet official" who had visited Hungary and found, to his horror, that in Hungary anyone can get anything in the shops. "Is this socialism?" the official exclaimed. Clearly, commented Aganbegyan, for this as well as for many other officials, "socialism" is equated with privileged access to goods and services. No wonder radical reform does not sit well with such people.

Of course, blatant self-interest, however tenacious, can hardly be used as an argument against reform. But ideology can. This is not to say that the appeal to ideology is necessarily sophistry, even though in the Soviet Union ideological principles have been adapted time and again to suit the political needs of the time. Some beliefs are genuinely held. One of them is the tenet that "socialism" and the market are incompatible and that production for sale is gradually to be replaced by conscious planning. Since the Soviet reforms—and even more so those already adopted in Hungary and China—point in the opposite direction, the sayings of Marx and Engels can always be cited against them.

Egalitarianism is yet another principle that the antireformers can rely on for their defense. This may seem contradictory, because privileges for officials are scarcely what Marx and Lenin meant by equality. But such privileges are out of the public eye, and what's more important, they go with rank—that is to say, they are a reward for "public service." Market-based inequalities, however, such as those arising from the sale of early vegetables, are seen as part and parcel of the capitalist mentality, the sordid chase after "profit," and thus a violation of the "socialist" ethos.

It would be an oversimplification to regard all bureaucrats as opponents of reforms. Tatiana Zaslavskaia is right to remind us, as she did in a paper presented in Vienna in 1987, that much depends both on the effect of the proposed changes on the career prospects and functions of given officials, and indeed also on the confidence in their abilities to work under new conditions. Similarly, she points out, younger and more skilled workers are likely to see advantages and opportunities in the proposed changes, whereas the older and less skilled are apt to resent them. Some managers welcome new responsibilities, other fear and shun them. The essential point is that taken together, human attitudes—particularly those of officials who are expected to implement the reforms—present serious obstacles to them.

The reformers are also faced with purely practical difficulties. One of them is what

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might be called the inevitability and impossibility of gradualness. For instance, to be effective, the reforms require a new set of prices and the abandonment of administered material allocation. But how can this be done swiftly in view of the horrendous shortages, excess demand, and material imbalances?

To the latter must also be added financial imbalances. As Gorbachev confirmed in his speech to the Nineteenth Party Conference in July 1988, the budget is in deficit and credit discipline is poor.* One cannot rely on the price mechanism if the monetary system is in disorder. One reason for imbalance between supply and demand for consumer goods has been the revenue loss from the reduction in the supply of vodka since 1986. The policy has been largely a failure not only because it led to the virtual disappearance of sugar from stores (bought out for the purpose of making *samogon*—moonshine), but also because it has proved impossible to cover the gap by a sufficient supply of other goods, and because the loss of revenue from vodka only enhanced the budget deficit. On top of this, the fall in oil prices has adversely affected the balance of payments and led to a reduction in imports of consumer goods and in budget revenue from foreign trade.

There are powerful reasons, then, for the inability to implement the whole reform package at once. However, gradualness also creates contradictions, with two "logics" existing at one and the same time. Thus enterprise autonomy requires a radical reform of prices and the abandonment of allocation of materials and the stress on plan fulfillment. All this requires the elimination of shortage (excess demand). Each element of the reform depends on the others. In an economy beset by shortages, anything that does not figure in the central production or allocation plan is deemed to be low priority and therefore liable to suffer from nondelivery of some of the needed inputs. To cite one example, according to the reform plans, enterprises are to have more resources for investment. However, if machinery, equipment, or building materials are in short supply and "rationed," the resources will not be available, and investment will suffer.

The chronic shortages are now openly discussed in the press and on television, and Gorbachev himself has blamed them on the present allocation system. To wait for the end of the shortages before abolishing the system, he said, would mean waiting forever. Perhaps the emphasis on financial discipline, a balanced budget, and payment of wages strictly in relation to performance will eliminate excess demand for both consumer and producer goods and facilitate the introduction of new prices, together with much greater freedom to vary or fix prices by negotiations. As of now, however, these measures have not been put into effect.

Yet another difficulty is the habits and relationships formed during the long reign of the "Administrative System." Managers have not had to bother about finding customers, because they were designated by their superiors in the planning hierarchy. And with guaranteed sales come sloth, incompetence, and almost total lack of initiative. Under the reforms, managers would have to learn the arts of competitive marketing, to which they are not accustomed and for which they were never trained. No wonder many of them seek out state orders, so that they may continue to work within the familiar procedures.

The same is true for bank managers with little or no experience in assessing the soundness or otherwise of investment projects. Under the old system, their functions were mainly to channel funds in accordance with instructions from above and to check on the enterprises' use or misuse of funds. Now, with a much larger segment of investment to be decentralized and to be financed partly out of retained profits and partly out of bank credits, their functions will be markedly different. And so, a period of training is mandatory. But is there time for it?

Another problem concerns the new role of the Communist party and its full-time officials,

* The Minister of Finance has finally admitted that the budget has been in deficit for years, and that no less than one hundred billion rubles of expenditure in 1989 is to be covered by advances from the State Bank. As a percentage of GNP, this is over three times the U.S. deficit.

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as well as of the economic ministries. According to Gorbachev, party functionaries are not to meddle in the managerial decision-making process. In fact, however, many party functionaries are to play the role of government officials, thus combining the two roles. A city party secretary, for example, would be at the same time the chairman of that city's soviet. The Central Committee's industrial department, for instance, on the chemical industry, has been abolished, some of its staff transferred to the appropriate industry.

Aside from the questionable logic of this new arrangement—how do you reconcile the fusion of two roles with the stated principle of "separation of powers"?—it also raises some vexing problems of a practical nature. For instance, what precisely are to be the functions of the party apparat on the one hand and of the economic ministry on the other? What are to be the relations between the ministry of the chemical industry and the chemical-industry enterprises and between those enterprises and the local soviet? How can the party's role in making all key appointments (the *nomenklatura system*) be reconciled with free elections of managers (also stipulated in the reforms)? Again, these questions—though continually discussed in the Soviet press—remain unanswered and unresolved.

The "reform package" is open to other criticisms, too. For instance, it pays little attention to externalities—that is, to situations in which microprofitability may be a misleading guide to efficiency. For example, in most countries public transport does not "pay," but this is not a reason for closing subways. Pollution is an external *dis*economy (it is usually profitable to pollute, it costs more money to clean up). The Soviets do now pay much more attention to ecology: For the past few years, both the press and high Soviet officials have been painting a shocking picture of ecological blight and of its effect on the health of millions of people. Already in June 1986, so many speakers at the Writers' Congress concentrated on this issue that the meeting came to be known as the "Ecological Congress." And at the Nineteenth Party Conference exactly two years later, Fiodor Morgun, chairman of the recently formed USSR State Committee for Environmental Protection, said that some fifty million Soviet citizens live in 102 cities where the pollution level exceeds permissible norms by ten times or more. By now, numerous ecological groups have been formed, with ever more people participating in them. However, antipollution measures add to costs and reduce profits, and so conflict with the aim of improving the financial results of enterprises.

Another area is that of investment. Aside from the problem of ensuring the availability of needed machinery and equipment, the decentralization of investment decisions raises the need for a capital market, or of some other ways of enabling enterprises with financial reserves to invest in other enterprises. There is also a dearth of information about future costs and needs that in no economy can be conveyed by current prices, however reformed: To invest in the future, one must be able to estimate future prices and costs, and to have access to information about the investment plans of one's potential competitors and/or suppliers of complementary inputs.

Then there is the problem of risk: Who is to bear it, who is either to be rewarded in the event of success or penalized in the event of failure? The reform now contains an explicit provision for bankruptcy, but available evidence suggests that it is very seldom applied because of the pressure to maintain full employment. (The same, incidentally, is true for Hungary.) Other questions too are legitimate, and urgent: Should workers suffer wage cuts if an enterprise proves unprofitable, especially if they had no voice in making the original investment decision? For that matter, would this not still be the case even if the decision is taken by a manager elected by workers? The press has cited many instances of election of management—and also concern in cases where the "winner" tolerated slack discipline.

Another vexing question is that of the powers of republics and local soviets. There has been much criticism in the Soviet press of the fact that overcentralization has meant that the vast bulk of the republics' output is

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allocated by and from Moscow, and that local soviets are powerless, inasmuch as they dispose neither of their own financial source nor of any control over material resources. With the revived slogan of "all power to the soviets" and the new constitutional provision for local tax revenues, local soviets have been encouraged to set up their own small-scale enterprises, alongside those controlled by all-union and/or republican ministries. In addition, republican powers have also been enhanced.

Yet all these praiseworthy moves have raised new issues. Some republics—in the first place the Baltic republics—have demanded "republican *khozraschet*" (cost-accounting), that is, control by each republic of enterprises within its borders. Yet might such a step not prove disruptive of inter-republican and inter-regional links? Surely the disastrous effects of loosening centrifugal forces in Yugoslavia should serve as an object lesson for Soviet planners. It is understandable that Lithuania, for example, resents the fact that 85 percent of its industrial output is controlled by Moscow. But is the answer to give that power to Vilnius? Would it not be better—and more in tandem with the reform model—to vest this power in management, leaving it free to negotiate with customers all over the USSR—and also, for that matter, with foreign firms? In fact, this is how the radical reformers see the way forward.

Much less potentially disruptive is the power of republics to experiment freely with reforms, notably in agriculture. In this instance Estonia is blazing a trail, with encouragement of family farming on long or even indefinite leases. In the Baltic republics there still survives an authentic peasant spirit that could take advantage of these new opportunities, but progress is slow. It will not be helped by the decisions of the Central Committee plenum held in March 1989, which envisaged the granting of leases by state and collective farms and not (as the reformers proposed) by the local authorities. (The farms are much more likely to retain control over what happens in what they still regard as "their" land.)

Groping Toward the Future

It should be clear, then, that the Soviet leadership is indeed trying to introduce radical reforms in the economy, and equally it should be clear that progress has been slow and uneven. There are, to repeat, three basic reasons for it: First, opposition, much (but not all) of it due to vested interests and privileges; second, the sheer practical difficulties of implementing the desired changes; and third, the gaps and ambiguities in the reform model itself.

Perhaps the most acute dilemma embedded in this process is that of plan versus market: In what form can the two be effectively combined? Where lies the boundary between them?

Thus far, the dilemma remains unresolved. In an article written jointly by two reformist economists, Gavril Popov and Nikolai Shmelev, the authors ask how it happens that a rigid centralized system, based on an indissoluble link between production and supply-of-inputs plans, generates a chronic supply deficit? "The answer," they write, "is trivially simple. . . . One cannot foresee everything," especially indirect requirements, as for instance of wire for electric motors required for oil pumps that pump oil required by the petrochemical industry, which makes dyestuffs that are needed for the cloth that in turn are needed for the clothing industry. The planners' traditional "material balance" approach tends to underestimate the indirect requirements of the indirect requirements.

Popov and Shmelev go on to discuss the importance of rational and flexible prices and the dangers of monopolistic abuses if price controls were eliminated. They quite rightly call attention to the dangers inherent in the pure "free-market" solutions, especially in long-term decisions that affect structural change, ecology, and the quality of life in general. Each system, they say, is bound to have both advantages and disadvantages. And then they offer their own solution: planning and price controls limited "to a few hundred of the most important products, that is, those which under favorable circumstances can be counted in physical units at the present level of knowledge and techniques for processing data." The

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remaining output should not be planned at all, either directively or indicatively.

The authors' solution seems eminently sensible. But it must be stressed that it is only one of the various proposals now being discussed, and that it is difficult to predict exactly how this crucial problem will be settled.

Yet whatever the eventual "mix" between planning and market, the direction in which the reformers are groping is clear, and so is their basic aim—namely, to create a more democratic socialist society in which there is a sizeable cooperative and private sector and in which the bulk of state enterprises produce for the market under a management democratically elected and responsible to its electors. To reach this goal, the reformers had to agree from the very outset that what has existed in the USSR heretofore was a "deformation" of socialism—indeed, as many authors have openly stated, no socialism at all!

Thus the economist A. Rakitsky in *Voprosy ekonomiki* (No. 10, 1988), rejects the Brezhnev view that the Soviet Union had "real [mature] socialism" and continues: "We live under a barracks-like deformation of socialism, our society is not yet socialist. Our society is so organized that the means of production are owned not by a society but by a caste which governs in the name of society." Others have put it in even starker terms. Indeed, some writers have even questioned the wisdom of the Founding Fathers. Thus the economist A. Sergeyev, in *Voprosy ekonomiki* No. 7, 1988:

> Marx and Engels held that socialism and commodity production were not only contradictory but also incompatible. Lenin held the same view. Even today no one would have the theoretical effrontery to claim that Lenin was the founder of the theory of commodity production under socialism. Was the theory of Marx, Engels and Lenin, then, incorrect?

This essay has outlined the numerous problems, difficulties, obstacles, and inconsistencies in the reform process now taking place in the USSR. It has also called attention to the formidable opposition to this process from various strata of society. Does this mean that failure is inevitable? I do not think so. Every reformer, including Gorbachev, is painfully aware of these problems and of the urgent need for resolute measures.

The problem of food and consumer goods is a case in point. Over the past few years, shortages in this critical area, always a problem in the Soviet Union, have become acute, so much so that they have come to threaten (as Soviet writers openly admit) the very legitimacy of *perestroika*. Thus the *Izvestia* columnist Alexandr Bovin:

> It is clear to everyone that if the country is not supplied in the next few years with foodstuffs, people with clothing, shoes, furniture, electric appliances and so on, if at least some kind of order is not brought into the services industry, if millions, tens of millions are not delivered from the exhausting senselessness of queues and of systematic humiliation by anyone dispensing such "services," all faith in perestroika will evaporate . . . (*Moscow News*, No. 1, p. 3, 1989).

The reason why this situation has deteriorated is not a decline in supply but a rapid rise in incomes. There is now much more money chasing the same (or almost the same) volume of goods. The budget deficit and "soft" credits are part of the cause, and so is a slackening of control over wages. Inflation is recognized as a growing problem. There is a collapse of confidence in the ruble, since it is increasingly difficult to buy what one wants. The practical problems of transition, the process of learning to work in new ways, are some causes of what is now seen as an acute crisis. But it is also true that inflationary pressure and worsening shortages make the transition even more difficult, if not impossible.

Some economists, such as Nikolai Shmelev, have advocated large loans to buy consumer goods from the West. Another idea that has been floated is to buy machinery in the West in order to expand the production of consumers' goods. Yet another is to expand rapidly joint ventures with Western firms and open up the internal market to them. In fact, this last suggestion has already been adopted. None of these variants is ideal—they all represent a drain on the supply of *valuta* (foreign currency), while some economists object to "quick fixes" because they perpetuate the country's dependence on the West and fail to address

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systemic defects. Most economists reject the Shmelev proposals. Even without them, the Soviet debt to the West has doubled between 1986 and 1989. Many advocate the dropping of expensive investment projects, allowing a shift in Soviet imports from machinery to consumer goods. However, the ministers have been strongly defending their investment projects.

Be that as it may, Gorbachev and his allies are alert to these problems, and seeking solutions to them. Above all, they are aware, as Gorbachev himself has put it, that "there is no other way" except reform. Continued stagnation would threaten the security of the regime, internally and externally. Whatever the magnitude of opposition within the ranks of the *apparatchiki,* it is the party leadership that is pressing forward, conscious as it is of the fact that economic failure translates into political failure as well. Cuts in expenditures have been accompanied by the conversion of parts of the defense industries to products for civilian needs.

It must be stressed that it would be unreasonable to expect any rapid improvement either in productivity or living standards; indeed we now have temporary regress. It is hoped that the radical measures adopted in agriculture (such as family leases, transfers of land into private hands, and so on) prove to have a quick and decisive effect on food supplies, but as of now this seems unlikely.

By the same token, it is unreasonable—in fact, unconscionable—not to welcome the changes now going on in the Soviet Union. Some people in the West, still mired in their anticommunist obsessions, take the view that the West should do everything to ensure the failure of the Gorbachev reforms, on the ground that a more efficient USSR would be a more dangerous USSR. This view stands logic on its head. In point of fact, a USSR concentrating its efforts on setting its own house in order, on forging closer economic and cultural relations with the West, and on cooperating rather than engaging in protracted conflict with Western powers, as Gorbachev is patently trying to do, will be a country infinitely more pleasant to live in—and with.

Unfortunately, the situation—political as well as economic—is deteriorating as these lines are written. Far from moving toward a market-based equilibrium, what we now have is a rapid spread of consumer rationing (meat, milk, sugar, soap, and many other items are no longer freely on sale in many parts of the country), and delays in completing investment projects are longer than ever. Economic malfunctions exacerbate the already dangerous tensions between nationalities. There are fewer grounds for optimism, and some observers (in and out of the Soviet Union) express alarm as to possible outcomes.

Should Gorbachev fail—and failure is by no means to be ruled out—the outcome would be a misfortune, perhaps even a calamity, for everyone concerned. The outcome depends first and foremost on internal factors. However, there is every reason for the West to extend a welcome to the reform process, to help as much as it can to speed it along—and every reason not to obstruct it. □

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New Perspectives on Black Americans

Edited by Martin Kilson

INTRODUCTION

The conclusions of the Kerner Commission Report on the urban riots during the late 1960s have been widely accepted; namely that this angry black urban upheaval was driven by a gnawing alienation and despair among mainly working-class and poor Afro-Americans. This sector of blacks suffered not just the usual vulgarities of American racism but extensive police brutality from mainly white police forces and were blocked from paths of mobility in the emergent postindustrial society. Between 1960 and 1967 urban America witnessed a major growth in central city black population of 2.4 million (nearly 90 percent of all black population growth for this period), while at the same time there was a steady exodus of industry and whites from central city milieux. This further weakened the working-class dynamic in many urban black communities.

The roots of the marginalization of poor blacks that sparked the upheavals of the sixties extend back across the three generations following the end of Reconstruction. Orlando Patterson's article traces the slave past and the vicious 1890s–1950s epoch as well as developments since the 1960s, delineating whites' pathological need to scapegoat weak groups—blacks especially—in a greed-driven capitalist democracy. Yet even during the racist epoch of 1890–1950 forces persisted to overcome whites' racist affront to blacks' status.

For example, Henry Louis Gates's article brilliantly charts the typography of self-giving forms and meanings that Afro-Americans have fashioned—and continue to fabricate—against American society's racist grain. And as Norman Hill's article reveals, in the workplace black workers reached out to white workers whenever possible, scabbed against their white proletarian tormentors when opportunity allowed, and shaped their own trade-union alternatives whenever that was feasible. Today the stable working class among blacks has a higher incidence of union membership than white workers and holds substantial power in many unions.

As Patterson suggests, the longstanding role of the black working class as cultural innovator and backer of community viability requires much more attention from both black and national leadership. Jerry Watts's article on the vagaries of black intellectuals' status—both within black and national patterns—shows how some black intellectuals find usefulness by turning to the black working-class as their main audience.

There is yet another crucial historical role of the black working class; namely, as wellspring of achieving individuals. This legacy of working-class blacks—of factory workers, domestics, artisans, and field hands—must be factored into the current crisis of poverty and the underclass, a crisis that now engulfs some one-third of black households, as Loïc Wacquant's article incisively reveals. But as Clement Cottingham's stunning analysis of gender-shift indicates, black women, while disproportionately caught in poverty as heads of families, have nonetheless brought about a disproportionate shift in educational achievement patterns between black males and females. The latter, now in front, are ensuring exponential shifts occupationally and status wise in the future.

A major policy implication flows from this gender-shift analysis, namely that national leadership—both private sector and public—must design poverty programs that give preference to upgrading poor women to working-class capability. They can be expected to revive the black working class's historic role as wellspring of achieving individuals—a role that will also gain sustenance from the overall feminist movement. If this special issue of *Dissent* stimulates new thinking and action in this area, it will have served a most useful purpose. □

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Orlando Patterson

TOWARD A STUDY OF BLACK AMERICA

Notes on the Culture of Racism

Any attempt to study black Americans immediately confronts a number of stubborn theoretical issues, compounded by a great deal of moral and political controversy. The most fundamental of these is the explanatory significance of cultural factors. Up to the sixties it was quite acceptable to at least partially account for aspects of black society in cultural terms. Then came a massive swing against such explanations in the late sixties and early seventies, focusing on the "culture of poverty" debate. The attack on the obvious flaws of the "culture of poverty" approach went, however, well beyond the specific deficiencies of Oscar Lewis and his school: It became an attack on all cultural explanations.

In the eighties a renewed interest in cultural explanations emerged, but it came, of all places, from economists such as Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury as well as from neoconservative journalists. These people, though rarely qualified to discuss cultural issues, tried to fill the intellectual vacuum left by the sociologists and urban anthropologists of the sixties. Their effort ended up as an embrace of death for cultural explanations in the wider social science community. Today, a sociologist, if he dares whisper the words "culture" or "values" in polite academic circles, risks being immediately dismissed as intellectually passé, if not as a crypto-reactionary who dares to propound arguments that amount to "blaming the victim."

Are cultural explanations of the black American experience in any way incompatible with structural or political ones? Do they necessarily imply any blaming of the victims? And what exactly is meant by the oft-used term "blaming the victim": Do we necessarily "blame" someone when we say that their behavior pattern and attitudes may be part of their problem? The answer to these questions is in the negative. But this is something to be proven; not to be taken for granted. Hence the first theoretical task for any historical sociology of black America must be a rehabilitation of the culture concept by clearing up the many messy theoretical problems that surround it.

There is also the problem of historical explanations, which should not be confused with those of culture. All cultural explanations have, by definition, a historical component. But not all historical explanations are necessarily cultural. Thus when Daniel Moynihan, following a long line of black historical sociologists stretching back from E. Franklin Frazier to W.E.B. DuBois, made the by-then familiar argument that the breakdown of the family during the period of slavery had persisted, and would persist, if reinforcing factors were not removed (and was irrationally pilloried by many of Frazier's and DuBois' greatest admirers), he was using a historical explanation, but he was not necessarily making a cultural one. The distinction between a social persistence and a cultural continuity is critical for any understanding of the problems of black America. A problem may persist over time because of socioeconomic reinforcements that may vary from one period to the next.

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Lower-class black women were sexually exploited during the period of slavery because of conditions peculiar to the system of slavery; their exploitation by white and middle-class black men persisted during the post-emancipation period because of their poverty and their legal disabilities; and today their persisting exploitation comes mainly from lower-class black men for reasons peculiar to the conditions of the urban ghetto. This unbroken history of gender oppression has little to do with culture. Lower-class black women are not normatively predisposed to masochism, whatever Spike Lee may imagine.

Cultural continuities are normatively reinforced self-sustaining attitudes and behavior patterns. It is absurd to claim that such continuities do not explain some aspects of black behavior. The sociological problem is to isolate precisely which areas of black life have become normative or institutionalized. This can only be done by means of the most sensitive, in-depth field studies, of the sort being conducted by scholars such as Elijah Anderson. Unfortunately, it is precisely such studies that are out of fashion today. Nearly all of the current vast outpouring of academic works on black Americans rely on quantitative methods, which, by their very nature, lack the instruments to make this vital distinction between problems that are cultural continuities and those that are socioeconomically conditioned persistences.

Not the least of the points I wish to emphasize is the fact that people are no more passive creatures of their cultures than they are of their social systems. Behind much of the ill-informed criticism of cultural analysis by liberal and left-leaning sociologists as well as ethnic cultural chauvinists (how laughably ironical that!) is the utterly unfounded assumption that culture cannot be changed, or does so only with imperceptible slowness. Were this indeed true, then the charge that cultural explanations were of the same order as racist ones might indeed have some merit. The assumption, however, is spurious, and so is the charge.

Framework for a Study of Black America

All I have to say may be summarized in the model diagramed on page 479. No understanding of black American society is possible without a clear grasp of its origins in slavery. Yet sadly, the thrust of most historical scholarship on American slavery since the seventies has been to undermine the critical importance of these two and a half centuries of the black, and American, experience. How this happened constitutes an essential preliminary chapter on the sociology of American historical knowledge. We do not have the space here to explain this paradoxical development, except to point out that black scholars and Marxists have been the most prominent in this subversion of the explanatory potency of slavery. Black bourgeois historians, anxious to prove that the group has had a past like all other Americans—one that can be shown to go back in an unbroken line to African culture, or out of the mistaken belief that the only dignified history is one that demonstrates near complete control of one's life—have hopelessly obfuscated the fundamental cultural tragedy, the nightmarish social catastrophe, and the sustained economic exploitation that was American slavery.

Marxist historians, partly out of a profound misunderstanding of the fundamentally capitalist nature of American slavery,* or partly from a deep sociological misunderstanding of the nature and dynamics of the family as an institution (especially the late Herb Gutman), have collaborated to generate a revisionist view of slavery that has had the effect of completely undercutting the traditional radical view. This is what I have elsewhere called the catastrophic conception of slavery. I remain convinced that it is the correct approach to the subject. As convinced, I might add, as were historians such as Carter G. Woodson, Benjamin Quarles, and, more recently, John Hope Franklin. Even Malcolm X grasped the catastrophic perspective when he told an audience in the Detroit ghetto in 1953: "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, my brothers and sisters—Plymouth Rock landed on us!"

The study of slavery must begin where

* Most notably in the early writings of Eugene Genovese, who interpreted the slave South as a highly paternalistic, precapitalist system. Ironically, this misunderstanding goes back to early classical economists, especially Adam Smith and John Elliott Cairnes.

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almost no American student of the subject has chosen to begin: with an understanding of what is unique about the slave relationship itself. Slavery is distinctive in being a relation of personal domination based on direct and indirect violence, in which the dominated is utterly excluded from all independent involvement in the wider community, and is parasitically dishonored, by which I mean that the master gains ego enhancement from his personal debasement of the slave, and all nonslaves gain collective honor from the degradation of the slave group.

While not alone in its racist ideology, American slave society was unique in the complexity and sophistication of the culture of slavery that it developed and in the extraordinary role slavery and the slave culture played in that development. The culture of the South became not simply a culture with a racist ideology, one conveniently justifying the enslavement of people, as was the case all over Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Islamic world, but rather a chronically racist culture. There is a critical difference between the two. England and France today both have racist ideologies in that many people there, perhaps the majority, believe in the inherent superiority of whites over nonwhite peoples. Yet they are not racist cultures, because this ideology is a minor component in their systems of belief; it serves no indispensible cultural or socioeconomic functions and is not a critical element in the way people define themselves physically and socially. Not so in America.

A great deal of what is evil in America, and—a point that cannot be overemphasized—a great deal of what later emerged as highly desirable, even for blacks, springs from, or originated in, a deep enmeshment with the culture of slavery and its positive valuation of racism. Gunnar Myrdal opened his famous study of black America with the much-cited observation that there is a conflict in the American democratic commitment to equality. Ironically, this is the most questionable statement in that great work, and to the extent that this view informed the work to that degree it obscured understanding of its subject. For the truth, the depressing, paradoxical truth about American history is that without slavery, and without the chronic, structurally reinforced racism generated by the system of slavery, there would either have been no democracy in America, or, at the very least, its whole character would have been fundamentally different from what we experience today. The Oxford historian J.C.D. Clark is only the latest in a long line of British scholars who have remarked on the fact that America, in contrast even with Britain, is peculiar in "the universally diffused belief" among all classes and groups "that their political system is a democracy, and that it is premised upon democratic values."[1] This intensely self-conscious commitment to the ideal of freedom is largely explained by the fact that America was the only Western industrial society that had large-scale slavery within its borders. As in classical Athens, American democracy dialectically emerged in that same process of "double exclusion" recently discussed by Pierre Vidal-Naquet: "the exclusion of women, which made it a 'men's club'; and the exclusion of slaves, which made it a 'citizens' club.' "[2]

Consider the seeming paradox of what I have called elsewhere our confounding fathers.[3] Almost every one of these noble founders of the nation and of our democracy was a major slaveholder. And yet they were not hypocrites. All were men of the utmost integrity. How? Why? What was going on in the making of America? Yale historian Edmund Morgan, in what is surely one of the single greatest studies of the American past, has laid bare the paradoxical truth: Slavery both enabled and defined the very character of Virginian democracy.[4] More recent studies such as Eric Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men,* have further shown how by means of the ante bellum propaganda war in which both sides used antiblack racism in defense of freedom, and the war itself that followed, the oppression of blacks became the decisive element in generating and reinforcing the nation's commitment to democracy and the more general ideal of freedom.

Hence the arrows that flow between the overarching racist culture and the structural exploitation of black people are double-headed.

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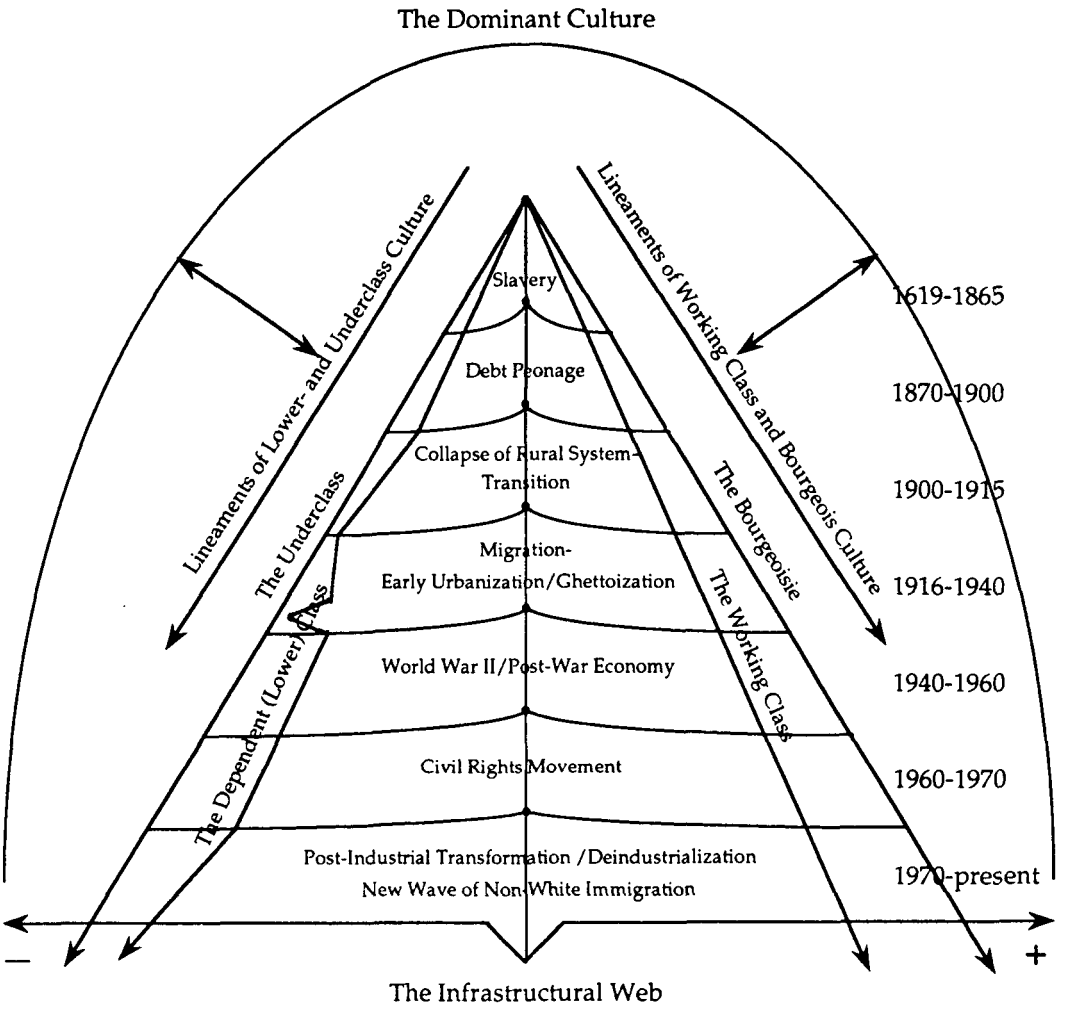

Model of Socio-Economic and Cultural Change In the Black Population

That racist culture not only constrained blacks directly in the thoroughgoing way it poisoned the minds of all nonblack Americans, natives *and immigrants*, to black folks, by imprinting upon the national consciousness the view that blacks did not, and could not and would never belong; but also offered a free collective cultural resource to all whites, one that was not only psychologically and economically useful, but politically generative. As W.J. Cash insightfully observed in *The Mind of the South*: "Negro entered into white man as profoundly as white man entered into Negro, subtly influencing every gesture, every word, every emotion and idea, every attitude."

It is critical that we understand, too, a peculiar feature of this culture of racism. Its conception of race was, from the early eighteenth century, extremely binary. The view that a person must legally and socially belong to one race or another, with no formally recognized intermediaries, is not only unusual, but had extraordinary consequences for American and black history both during and after the system of slavery, indeed more so after slavery. It sustained notions of racial purity, but this was the least of its consequences. It effectively reinforced the division of the exploited classes, especially in the South. But it was also the most effective cultural resource in the absorption and unification of the many ethnic groups that streamed into America. When the poorest, most unqualified, and most

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alien European peasants arrived on the shores of America, what they received, and quickly learned to value and express, was the collective good of nonblackness, of positively valued, strongly charged whiteness. To the degree that they used that resource, to that extent did they share the major burden of the American past. And use it they did. Indeed, the poorer and more marginal these immigrants were, the greater became the marginal utility of racism for them.

But if the culture of racism was used to unify all who, by landing on these shores, found themselves miraculously within the Caucasian chalk circle, it was also used to disunify and control, to undercut any effort at political and class unity on the part of the white working classes. The threat of using black slaves, and later ex-slaves, as scabs was, I am convinced, a powerful tool in the hands of capital not only in devaluing the labor of the white southern poor, but in allowing the large-scale increase in immigration to the North during periods of high labor supply when it was clear to all that the only purpose more immigrants would serve was to reduce the already dismal bargaining power of the white poor. The key to any understanding of what S.M. Lipset refers to as America's "exceptionalism," especially the fact that it is the only Western industrial society without a strong socialist party and a universal welfare state, is the integral role of slave-bred racism in its culture.*

Slavery and Today's Blacks

The overarching racist culture was one thing. More important during the period of slavery were the structural constraints of the plantation. Here race was really less directly important. What was critical was the division of labor, the grinding daily exploitation and the social modes of adjustment to the plantation regime. And it is here that any study of the black experience must do some serious rethinking and revision.

For one thing, there was not a single mode of response, no such thing as "the American slave"; any "composite biography" of the slave must be seriously called in question. There were at least four modes of adjustment to the slave system leading to the emergence of four distinct types of black American subcommunities from at least the early nineteenth century. First, there was a distinct underclass of slaves. These were the people who were not only broken by the system, but who lived either fecklessly or dangerously. They were the "incorrigible" blacks of whom the slaveholder class was forever complaining. Descriptions of them abound. They ran away. They were idle. They were compulsive liars. They seemed immune to punishment. There is independent evidence from the slave autobiographies and interviews that clearly indicates that a distinct group of shiftless, economically and socially deviant slaves existed. What is more, they persisted after slavery. We can trace the underclass, as a persisting social phenomenon, back to this group. And if they were a nuisance for the slaveholder class, they were then, as now, an even greater problem for other blacks. We hear little about this group in historical writings on slavery today. It goes against the grain of the conventional academic and political wisdom about the black past. This is ridiculous. Wherever we find slavery we find such a group: in ancient Greece and Rome; in medieval Korea, all over the Islamic world. West Africans were not supermen. It would have been a miracle had two and a half centuries of the most sustained form of social and economic domination and degradation in a peculiarly vicious racist culture not created pathologies. The black underclass has always been with us. And the white one too.

However, this class was then, as now, a small minority of slaves, at the very most five percent or so, if one may hazard a guess. Larger in size was the group that I call the dependent or accommodating class of slaves. These were the perfect slaves, the kind of blacks that made absent planters pine for home—the Uncle Toms and Aunt Jemimas. They constituted a distinct subgroup and they too have left their mark on black American culture. They worked out a symbiosis with the

* For an excellent critique of the "new" labor history's attempt to underplay the racist exclusion of blacks from good jobs by white workers, many of them recent immigrants, see Herbert Hill, "Myth-Making and Labor History: Herbert Gutman and the United Mine Workers of America," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society,* (Winter 1988).

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white group, usually within the context of the household. They accepted fully the superiority of the whites. And yet, they did so without necessarily abandoning all dignity. Uncle Tom was real, and he deserves our sympathy, if not quite our respect.

Third, there was the majority of the slave population. These are the true, and still largely unsung, heroes of American history. For not only did they survive the horrors of slavery, but whenever and wherever the system offered the slightest openings one finds clear evidence of social and cultural creativity. Unfortunately, these openings were few and far between. Their most dramatic revolt and triumph is to be found, not in the political arena (where there were never any openings), but in their extraordinary resistance to the perverted Christianity that the planter class tried to impose upon them and their reconstruction of their own version of the creed.

Although it is good to applaud the quiet achievements of this group, we should be careful not to make supermen of them by failing to take account of those areas where the system was simply too overwhelming, resulting in compromises and problems that lingered long after slavery. Let me take the most important case in point: family life. This is in need of serious rethinking and restudy. Conventional scholarly wisdom is now dominated by what can only be called the simplicities of demographic reification. It used to be thought that the female-headed family was the norm for this group. Revisionist studies during the seventies and eighties have shown persuasively that something very similar to the nuclear family was the norm among them. From this essentially demographic finding all sorts of claims have been made, in effect, that the black family in the dominant group of blacks was alive and well during the period of slavery, and that this then formed the basis of stable extended rural families in the postemancipation South.

This is highly questionable. A house, as the saying goes, is not a home. A demographic unit is no more than a unit of reproduction. When one states that the family was stable and in good shape among a people, or during a particular period, one is in fact making a very complex claim. The seemingly simple nuclear family has at least fourteen asymmetric roles, each valued, signified and expressed in many different ways: husband, wife, father-son, son-father, father-daughter, daughter-father, mother-son, son-mother, brother-sister, and so on. We take all of these for granted, the way we take the complex mechanism of our hearts for granted, because as the core institution in any culture its complex of valuational weights, meanings and expressions is highly institutionalized, early and deeply learned, and rarely questioned.

The worst horror of slavery, its single greatest crime against the slave population, was its systematic ethnocidal assault on the inner workings of the complex rules, roles, meanings, and relations of the black family. It did not attack the basic form of the institution. Indeed, like a highly evolved parasite that instinctively recognizes that the death of its host would entail its own demise, slavery reinforced the reproductive potential of the slave union even as it ate away at its inner institutional core. It systematically undermined the marital and parental bonds, especially focusing on the male role. It did so not only by the formal legal denial of all marital rights and custodial claims in children and parents, but in the countless open as well as more subtle humiliations of spouses, parents, and children in their relations with each other, and in the delegitimation of all familial authority.

To demonstrate this requires "thick descriptions" and deep interpretations of the abundant literary and related evidence. Demographic and econometric data are very nearly useless for this purpose. Black historical scholarship cries out for an assault on the simplicities and obfuscations of recent bourgeois and misguided Marxist studies on the subject. The institutional fragility of the black family, even within its most stable class, has always been and remains the group's most serious liability, the most pernicious heritage of its slave past. Until the black family is fully rehabilitated, American society has a serious debt to repay the black American. That black leaders and their liberal allies are today among the most serious critics of this view must surely be the most tragic irony of present commentary on the black condition.

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There was a fourth distinct group of blacks during the period of slavery: the freed blacks on and off the plantations and the favored mixed group of slaves. A fair amount has been written on this group. Even when freed they were truly "slaves without masters," as Ira Berlin has ably shown. What interests me is their distinctive mode of accommodation to the system of slavery and postemancipation society: the complex of values, meanings and expressions they developed and passed down to their inheritors, the black bourgeoisie. Their chronic hostility and ambivalence to working-class blacks, and their notorious color prejudices, are well known and have been thoroughly analyzed, perhaps too much so.

Emancipation and Today's Blacks

The abolition of slavery marked only the end of a long beginning for black Americans. The schema above indicates the key points and structural developments of the group. Several important aspects of this development must now be noted.

The first is that when slavery was abolished only the personal, legally enforceable relation of slavery was removed. The racist culture of slavery not only continued but was compensatorily emphasized as never before. Indeed, one may seriously argue that the culture of slavery, by which I mean the whole set of values, meanings, and expressions directed at the black American as a slave and ex-slave, continued right down to the 1960s. Only with the civil rights movement was the culture of slavery finally demolished. The civil rights movement, in succeeding where it did, marked the close of the abolition movement in America. It did not, however, mark the end of America's culturally entrenched racism.

Second, it is clear now that from right after slavery blacks always faced two sets of constraints: those of the overarching racist culture and those of the underlying social structure. This underlying structure was not necessarily overtly racist but it invariably had the effect of undermining the position and opportunities of the black population. Rural peonage, as we will argue shortly, was covertly racist, even though set up as a means of controlling both black and white labor. Its deleterious impact on the blacks reinforced pre-existing disadvantages, and the incapacity of blacks to move from under its weight reinforced the racist view of the group. What this all means is that what is today called institutional racism was always with the black population. It is a cardinal error to argue that it has only recently emerged as the critical constraint on the black group as overt racism declined. Throughout the history of the black experience in America, institutional (indirect) racism and direct overarching culturally based racism have reinforced each other.

What a historical sociology of the black population will most likely show is that the set of structural changes that emerged at key moments offered considerable constraints but also some opportunities. The web lines to the left of the points in the diagram (these points being critical socioeconomic watersheds) are meant to suggest the constraints and their largely negative effects that had their greatest impact, as always, on the segment of the population least able to cope: hence a reinforcement of their position. Constraining factors, however, do always offer some very tenuous opportunities, and it is these that are seized by the continuing dependent or accommodating class. The structural web lines to the right of the key historical points suggest the more meaningful opportunities that these turning points offered and the fact that they reinforced the black working class and bourgeoisie.

In what has been rightly hailed as the most important work on the post-Civil War era in recent times, Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch have brilliantly shown the ways in which institutional forces and the overarching racist culture reinforced each other in aborting black economic and social development beyond the initial gains right after emancipation. The persisting culture of slavery directly constrained blacks and was effectively used by the white artisanal group to reduce black competition, the most striking effect of which was the extraordinary rapidity of the decline in the proportion of skilled blacks very soon after slavery.

"Nonetheless," they write, "it is more appropriate to think of racism as shaping the context within which the adjustments were

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worked out than as motivating the changes themselves." They then proceed to show how the system of debt peonage, focusing on the critical role of the highly localized, small-scale merchant banker, proved devastating to black economic growth even though this tragic institutional development can be explained without any reference to racism. Indeed, the system exploited both the black and the white poor and seriously retarded general southern economic growth:

> Southerners erected an economic system that failed to reward individual initiative on the part of blacks and was therefore ill-suited to their economic advancement. As a result, the inequalities originally inherited from slavery persisted. But there was a by-product of this effort at racial repression: the system tended to cripple all economic growth. It caught up whites in its trap, stifled their initiative, and curtailed their economic progress.[5]

There were, however, two critical differences between the white poor and the black. First, blacks paid doubly dearly for this backward system because it "reinforced those racist beliefs" that were at the core of the overarching culture. The more the white poor declined, the greater their reliance on the powerful psychological and social resource provided by the dominant culture. Second, when the system did finally change, the white poor not only had more resources to buffer the shock of depression, but had overwhelming access to opportunities where and when they came about.

At each watershed new forces emerged that reinforced the persistence or continuity of these four basic groups and their respective modes of cultural adjustment. I will restrict myself to only a few important general observations. First, there is abundant evidence of an underclass among the earliest urban black communities. In the post-emancipation South, according to Howard Rabinowitz, class "[d]ivisions among urban Negroes were even more significant than those existing among whites."[6] In all the major Southern cities there existed a "demi-world" of underclass blacks who congregated in notorious areas such as Nashville's "White Castle" and Atlanta's "Ant Hole" as well as the Beaver Slide slum settlement. Then, as now, working- and middle-class blacks were the main victims of underclass criminality; then, as now, underclass "crime, vice and ignorance led to generalizations about 'the negro.' "[7] What was true of the urban South rapidly became true in the urban North. Consider the following remarkable passage:

> In the city of Philadelphia the increasing number of bold and daring crimes committed by Negroes in the last ten years has focused the attention of the city on this subject. There is a widespread feeling that something is wrong with a race that is responsible for so much crime, and that strong remedies are called for. One has but to visit the corridors of the public buildings, when the courts are in session, to realize the part played in law-breaking by the Negro population. The various slum centers of the colored criminal population have lately been the objects of much philanthropic effort, and the work there has aroused discussion. Judges on the bench have discussed the matter. Indeed, in the minds of many, this is the real Negro problem.[8]

This is not a conservative social scientist writing about the Philadelphia underclass in the 1980s. It is a radical black sociologist, W.E.B. DuBois, writing about the Philadelphia underclass in the 1880s in a major study on the city published in 1899.

Second, what I have called the dependent class survives today in the group that modern analysts have identified as the working poor. Where once this group depended directly on the white families who retained them, their condition rising and falling with the fortunes of their patron's household, today they lead an equally precarious existence wholly at the mercy of "the public household," that is, the rise and fall of the economy. They typically live in two-person households, but their institutions are extremely fragile, and they seem to have no resources on which to fall back during economic downturns. David Ellwood describes the plight of this class of blacks:

> The poverty of two-parent families is the poverty of the working poor. The fortunes of these families are closely linked to the performance of the economy. Good times help, but bad times may be devastating. By some measures, these two-parent families are the least secure members of society, for they get little in the way of income or

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medical supports despite their vulnerability to swings in the economy. If we are really serious about reinforcing the values of autonomy, work, family, and community, then we must find a way to improve the economic security of this group without putting them into a welfare system.[9]

Third, while employment opportunities for blacks in the South decreased during the first four decades of this century, and they faced formidable obstacles in the northern industrial sector, not least of all from racist unions that systematically excluded them, all was not lost. The black working class was never broken, even if for decades all it could do was dig in and hold on to the small gains it had been able to eke out in the rural South and the harsh racist mills of the North. If blacks today want to find true collective heroism, this is the period of the group's history where they must search for it. But not among their bourgeois ancestors. We have heard so much about the Harlem Renaissance, a second-rate bourgeois romantic movement if ever there was one; we hear little about the extraordinary acts of personal sacrifice and survival, of resistance against the industrial exploitation of the white ruling class and the pitiless social and economic assaults from the native and immigrant white working classes.

Nor did they simply survive. They also created, in extraordinary abundance, cultural artifacts that the entire nation was quick to share. As Lawrence Levine's illuminating work on the subject demonstrates, both during the period of slavery and the ordeal of southern debt-peonage, the black working class had created an incomparably rich tradition of oral literature in addition to the religion that remained exclusively their own.[10] On moving to the urban centers of the nation, it was they who then created the two traditions of music that were to become America's distinctive contribution to world culture: the popular art of the blues and the high art of Jazz, America's music. In the history of modern industrial societies, no exploited class has received less, and has given more, to the civilization that so brutally used it.

Homeostasis, Then and Now

There is one critical finding of Ransom and Sutch's study of the postemancipation system that must be emphasized because it has remained of enormous significance down to present times. It is what may be generalized as the homeostatic or compensating principle of the entire system of racial domination. Thus it is significant that it was only when the "malignant cancer" of debt peonage began to collapse under the external shock of the boll weevil scourge that Jim Crow laws were introduced. The infestation began in 1894 and the first Jim Crow laws were introduced in 1898. By 1918 the system of peonage had come to an end; by then the system of legally based segregation was fully in place. In other words, once the institutional control over the black population began to decline, the overarching racist culture immediately turned up its direct cultural controls in the form of legalized oppression: "Jim Crow had arisen as a form of racial repression to replace an economic system that had earlier stifled black initiative, ensured black poverty, and demoralized black leaders."[12]

This homeostatic principle continued to operate throughout the twentieth century. Indeed, we have been living through the operation of just this principle of American racist culture over the past decade and a half. It comes as no surprise that just as the black working and middle classes began to make some headway under the impact of affirmative action laws, there was an upsurge of direct racism, reflected most crudely in the upsurge of KKK and other neofascist groups as well as the increased number of overt racist attacks (including one unambiguous old-style lynching of a randomly selected working-class black southern youth) but more subtly, and far more dangerously, in the powerful cultural signals given by the Reagan presidency that racist intolerance is once again acceptable. The most dramatic evidence of this, of course, was the obscene appeal to racist bigotry in the last presidential election, something unthinkable a decade ago. One feels this revitalized racist

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ambience everywhere, though in its subtler forms it is hard to pin down.

And it is everywhere; in the increase in racist graffiti on campuses, in the hardened stares at apparently successful blacks, in the renewed hostility to biracial couples, in the quite conspicuous artificial blonding of the white population as both women and men of all white ethnic groups embrace the Aryan somatic ideal, in the empty seats next to blacks on crowded northern trains and buses, in the excessive preoccupation with the underclass (the direct modern counterpart to the excessive preoccupation of the slaveholder class with the "incorrigible" shiftless class of slaves), in the mean-spirited intellectual hostilities and moral prevarications of neoconservative thinkers with their lately discovered, hypocritical concern for the honor and reputation of "deservingly" successful blacks, in the shameless celebration of greed, and, perhaps most depressing of all, in the quiet, deathly dissipation of all compassion for those who have failed to make it.

What to Do

This situation leads to the following conclusions:

(1) A return to history and some serious rethinking of recent revisionist historiography on the black past are essential prerequisites for any understanding of the present crisis.

(2) Cultural analysis must inform our attempts to understand the external racist environment that constrains all black Americans as well as the internal problems that beset, in different ways, the various classes among them.

(3) All white Americans share the burdens and responsibilities of slavery and its racist heritage. Postemancipation immigrants and their descendants fully exploited racism, and even were they model liberals the fact remains that becoming a citizen of another country is like buying into a company: one enjoys the profits of its material and moral economy, but equally, one shares all its liabilities and moral burdens. If the present descendants of postemancipation immigrants wish to be relieved of the moral burden of slavery, they had better stop cheering on the Fourth of July.

(4) We must eschew gross aggregation in our discussion of the black population. It makes little sense to discuss this complex population of over thirty million people, spread over a vast continent, in dualistic terms.

(5) The underclass is not a new phenomenon, having persisted from the days of slavery. Exaggerating its importance can serve and has served racist purposes. In our consideration of this group there ought to be greater concern with the segment of the black population most exposed to its violence and destruction.

(6) Which leads me to close with an appeal on behalf of the black working class, the silent, near-forgotten plurality of the black population. Recently I did a call-in show in Madison. One of the callers described himself as a working-class black man, and he wanted to know why we intellectuals have nothing to say about him and his problems. He wondered if I knew how tough it was for him and his family; if I could even imagine what a nightmare it was for him as a father each time his children left their home and became exposed to the underground culture of the underclass that everyone seemed so concerned about. I could hear the pain in his voice, sense his isolation, and, above all, detect his complete disappointment with me and the academic community that I stood for.

A few days after this disturbing experience, working-class mothers in the black community of Boston went on a march to protest the alarming rise of black crime in the area. Nearly all the mothers who marched had had a child murdered by underclass youths. The son of one of the women, however, had been killed by the police when he had gone on a joy ride through the crowded streets of Boston in a stolen bus, risking the lives of countless black and white people. Astonishingly, it was this mother of one of the victimizers whom the liberal *Boston Globe* selected as the protesters' representative. A large photograph of her being comforted by the city's conservative Roman Catholic cardinal accompanied its account of the demonstration. The faces of the grieving working-class mothers as they looked on at this spectacle

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brought back forcefully to my mind's ear the cry of anguish from the working man out there in white Wisconsin.

As concerned Americans, it is time that we started taking the lives, the fears, and the aspirations of black working people seriously. And as scholars it is time we began to recognize their existence. □

Notes

[1] J.C.D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 168.

[2] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 206. I have explored this problem at greater length in my forthcoming work: *Out of Evil: Freedom in Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

[3] Orlando Patterson, "The Unholy Trinity: Freedom, Slavery and the American Constitution," *Social Research* (Autumn, 1987).

[4] Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975).

[5] Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 186.

[6] Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 226.

[7] Ibid., chapter 10, passim.

[8] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study (Philadelphia, 1899)* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 241. See also, Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia.*

[9] David T. Ellwood, *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 81.

[10] Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[11] Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom*, p. 198.

dissent

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Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

Some Meanings of Blackness

The question of color takes up much space in these pages, but the question of color, especially in this country, operates to hide the graver questions of the self.

—James Baldwin, 1961

. . . blood, darky, Tar Baby, Kaffir, shine . . . moor, blackamoor, Jim Crow, spook . . . quadroon, meriney, red bone, high yellow . . . Mammy, porch monkey, home, homeboy, George . . . spearchucker, schwarze, Leroy, Smokey . . . mouli, buck, Ethiopian, brother, sistah. . . .

—Trey Ellis, 1989

I had forgotten the incident completely, until I read Trey Ellis's essay, "Remember My Name," in a recent issue of the *Village Voice* (June 13, 1989). But there, in the middle of an extended italicized list of the by-names of "the race" ("the race" or "our people" being the terms my parents used in polite or reverential discourse, "jigaboo" or "nigger" more commonly used in anger, jest, or pure disgust) it was: "George." Now the events of that very brief exchange return to mind so vividly that I wonder why I had forgotten it.

My father and I were walking home at dusk from his second job. He "moonlighted" as a janitor in the evenings for the telephone company. Every day but Saturday, he would come home at 3:30 from his regular job at the paper mill, wash up, eat supper, then at 4:30 head downtown to his second job. He used to make jokes frequently about a union official who moonlighted. I never got the joke, but he and his friends thought it was hilarious. All I knew was that my family always ate well, that my brother and I had new clothes to wear, and that all of the white people in Piedmont, West Virginia, treated my parents with an odd mixture of resentment and respect that even we understood at the time had something directly to do with a small but certain measure of financial security.

He had left a little early that evening because I was with him and I had to be in bed early. I could not have been more than five or six, and we had stopped off at the Cut-Rate Drug Store (where no black person in town but my father could sit down to eat, and eat off real plates with real silverware) so that I could buy some caramel ice cream, two scoops in a wafer cone, please, which I was busy licking when Mr. Wilson walked by.

Mr. Wilson was a very quiet white man, whose stony, brooding, silent manner seemed designed to scare off any overtures of friendship, even from white people. He was Irish, as was one-third of our village (another third being Italian), the more affluent among whom sent their children to "Catholic School" across the bridge in Maryland. He had white straight hair, like my Uncle Joe, whom he uncannily resembled, and he carried a black worn metal lunch pail, the kind that Riley carried on the television show. My father always spoke to him, and for reasons that we never did understand, he always spoke to my father.

"Hello, Mr. Wilson," I heard my father say.

"Hello, George."

I stopped licking my ice cream cone, and asked my Dad in a loud voice why Mr. Wilson had called him "George."

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"Doesn't he know your name, Daddy? Why don't you tell him your name? Your name isn't George."

For a moment I tried to think of who Mr. Wilson was mixing Pop up with. But we didn't have any Georges among the colored people in Piedmont; nor were there colored Georges living in the neighboring towns and working at the mill.

"Tell him your name, Daddy."

"He knows my name, boy," my father said after a long pause. "He calls all colored people George."

A long silence ensued. It was "one of those things," as my Mom would put it. Even then, that early, I knew when I was in the presence of "one of those things," one of those things that provided a glimpse, through a rent curtain, at another world that we could not affect but that affected us. There would be a painful moment of silence, and you would wait for it to give way to a discussion of a black superstar such as Sugar Ray or Jackie Robinson.

"Nobody hits better in a clutch than Jackie Robinson."

"That's right. Nobody."

I never again looked Mr. Wilson in the eye.

But I loved the names that we gave ourselves when no white people were around. And I have to confess that I have never really cared too much about what we called ourselves publicly, except when my generation was fighting the elders for the legitimacy of the word "black" as our common, public name. "I'd rather they called me 'nigger,'" my Uncle Raymond would say again and again. "I can't *stand* the way they say the word *black*. And, by the way," he would conclude, his dark brown eyes flashing as he looked with utter disgust at my tentative Afro, "when are you going to get that nappy shit *cut*?"

There was enough in our public name to make a whole generation of Negroes rail against our efforts to legitimize, to naturalize, the word "black." Once we were black, I thought, we would be free, inside at least, and maybe from inside we would project a freedom outside of ourselves. "Free your mind," the slogan went, "and your behind will follow." Still, I value those all too rare, precious moments when someone "slips," in the warmth and comfort of intimacy, and says the dreaded words: "Was he colored?"

I knew that there was power in our name, enough power that the prospect frightened my maternal uncles. To open the "Personal Statement" for my Yale admission application in 1968, I had settled upon the following: "My grandfather was colored, my father is Negro, and I am black." (If that doesn't grab them, I thought, then nothing will.) I wonder if my daughters, nine years hence, will adapt the line, identifying themselves as "I am an African American." Perhaps they'll be Africans by then, or even feisty rapper-dappers. Perhaps, by that time, the most radical act of naming will be a return to "colored."

I began to learn about the meanings of blackness—or at least how to give voice to what I had experienced—when I went off to Yale. The class of 1973 was the first at Yale to include a "large" contingent of Afro-Americans, the name we quickly and comfortably seized upon at New Haven. Like many of us in those years, I gravitated to courses in Afro-American studies, at least one per semester, despite the fact that I was premed, like almost all the other black kids at Yale—that is, until the ranks were devastated by organic chemistry. (The law was the most common substitute.) The college campus, then, was a refuge from explicit racism, freeing us to read and write about our "racial" selves, to organize for recruitment of minority students and faculty, and to demand the constitutional rights of the Black Panther party for self-defense—an action that led, at New Haven at least, to a full-fledged strike in April of 1970, two weeks before Nixon and Kissinger invaded Cambodia. The campus was our sanctuary, where we could be as black as the ace of spades and nobody seemed to mind.

Today the white college campus is a rather different place. Black studies, where it has survived—and it has survived only at those campuses where *someone* believed enough in its academic integrity to insist upon a sound academic foundation—is entering its third decade. More black faculty members are tenured than ever before, despite the fact that

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only eight hundred or so black students took the doctorate in 1986, and fully half of these were in education. Yet for all the gains that have been made, racial tensions on college campuses appear to be on the rise, with a monitoring group finding incidents reported at over one hundred and seventy-five colleges since the 1986–87 academic year (and this is just counting the ones that made the papers). The dream of the university as a haven of racial equity, as an ultimate realm beyond the veil, has not been realized. Racism on our college campuses has become a palpable, ugly thing.

Even I—despite a highly visible presence as a faculty member at Cornell—have found it necessary to cross the street, hum a tune, or smile, when confronting a lone white woman in a campus building or on the Commons late at night. (Once a white coed even felt it necessary to spring from an elevator that I was about to enter, in the very building where my department was housed.) Nor can I help but feel some humiliation as I try to put a white person at ease in a dark place on campus at night, coming from nowhere, confronting that certain look of panic in their eyes, trying to think grand thoughts like Du Bois but—for the life of me—looking to them like Wille Horton. Grinning, singing, scratching my head, I have felt like Steppin Fetchit with a Ph.D. So much for Yale; so much for Cambridge.

The meanings of blackness are vastly more complex, I suspect, than they ever have been before in our American past. But how to explain? I have often imagined encountering the ghost of the great Du Bois, riding on the shoulders of the Spirit of Blackness.

"Young man," he'd say, "what has happened in my absence? Have things changed?"

"Well, sir," I'd respond, "your alma mater, Fair Harvard, has a black studies department, a Du Bois Research Center, and even a Du Bois Professor of History. Your old friend, Thurgood Marshall, sits like a minotaur as an associate justice on the Supreme Court. Martin Luther King's birthday is a *federal* holiday, and a black man you did not know won several Democratic presidential primaries last year. Black women novelists adorn the *New York Times* Best Seller lists, and the number one television show in the country is a situation comedy concerning the lives and times of a refined Afro-American obstetrician and his lovely wife, who is a senior partner in a Wall Street law firm. Sammy Davis, Jr.'s second autobiography has been widely—"

"Young man, I have come a long way. Do not trifle with the Weary Traveler."

"I would not think of it, sir. I revere you, sir, why, I even—"

"How many of them had to die? How many of our own? Did Nkrumah and Azikwe send troops? Did a nuclear holocaust bring them to their senses? When Shirley Graham and I set sail for Ghana, I pronounced all hope for our patient people doomed."

"No, sir," I would respond. "The gates of segregation fell rather quickly after 1965. A new middle class defined itself, a talented tenth, the cultured few, who, somehow, slipped through the cracks."

"Then the preservation of the material base proved to be more important then the primal xenophobia that we had posited?"

"That's about it, Doctor. But regular Negroes still catch hell. In fact, the ranks of the black underclass have never been larger."

I imagine the great man would heave a sigh, as the Spirit of Blackness galloped away.

From 1831, if not before, to 1965, an ideology of desegregation, of "civil rights," prevailed among our thinkers. Abolitionists, Reconstructors, neoabolitionists, all shared one common belief: that if we could only use the legislature and the judiciary to create and interpret the laws of desegregation and access, all else would follow. As it turns out, it was vastly easier to dismantle the petty forms of apartheid in this country (housing, marriage, hotels, and restaurants) than anyone could have possibly believed it would be, *without* affecting the larger patterns of inequality. In fact, the economic structure has not changed one jot, in any fundamental sense, except that black adult and teenage unemployment is much higher now than it has been in my lifetime. Considering the out-of-wedlock birthrate, the high school dropout rate, and the unemployment figures, the "two nations" predicted by the Kerner Commission in 1968 may be upon us. And the

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conscious manipulation of our public image, by writers, filmmakers, and artists, which many of us *still* seem to think will bring freedom, has had very little impact in palliating our structural social problems. What's the most popular television program in South Africa? The "Cosby Show." Why not?

Ideology, paradoxically, was impoverished when we needed it most, during the civil rights movement of the early 1960s. Unable to theorize what Cornel West calls "the racial problematic," unwilling (with very few exceptions) to theorize class, and scarcely able even to contemplate the theorizing of the curious compound effect of class-cum-race, we have—since the day after the signing of the Civil Rights act of 1965—utterly lacked any instrumentality of ideological analysis, beyond the attempts of the Black Power and Black Aesthetic movements, to *invert* the signification of "blackness" itself. Recognizing that what had passed for "the human," or "the universal," was in fact white essentialism, we substituted one sort of essentialism (that of "blackness") for another. That, we learned quickly enough, was just not enough. But it led the way to a gestural politics captivated by fetishes and feel-bad rhetoric. The ultimate sign of our sheer powerlessness is all of the attention that we have given, in the past few months, to declaring the birth of the African-American, and pronouncing the Black Self dead. Don't we have anything better to do?

Now, I myself happen to like African American, especially because I am, as a scholar, an Africanist as well as an African-Americanist. Certainly the cultural continuities among African, Caribbean, and Black American cultures cannot be denied. (The irony is that we often thought of ourselves as "African" until late into the nineteenth century. The death of the African was declared by the Park school of sociology in the first quarter of this century, which thought that the hyphenated ethnicity of the Negro American would prove to be ultimately liberating.) But so tame and unthreatening is a politics centered on onomastics that even the *New York Times,* in a major editorial, declared its support of this movement.

> If Mr. Jackson is right and blacks now prefer to be called African-Americans, it is a sign not just of their maturity but of the nation's success . . . . Blacks may now feel comfortable enough in their standing as citizens to adopt the family surname: American. And their first name, African, conveys a pride in cultural heritage that all Americans cherish. The late James Baldwin once lamented, "Nobody knows my name." Now everyone does (December 22, 1988).

To which one young black writer, Trey Ellis, responded recently: "When somebody tries to tell me what to call myself in all uses just because they come to some decision at a cocktail party to which I wasn't even invited, my mama raised me to tell them to kiss my black ass" (*Village Voice*, June 13, 1989, p. 38). As he says, sometimes African American just won't do.

Ellis's amused rejoinder speaks of a very different set of concerns, and made me think of James Baldwin's prediction of the coming of a new generation that would give voice to blackness:

> While the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness. . . . And this tale, according to that face, that body, those strong hands on those strings, has another aspect in every country, and a new depth in every generation (*The Price of the Ticket*).

In this spirit, Ellis has declared the birth of a "New Black Aesthetic" movement, comprising artists and writers who are middle-class, self-confident, and secure with black culture, and not looking over their shoulders at white people, wondering whether or not the Mr. Wilsons of their world will call them George. Ellis sees creative artists such as Spike Lee, Wynton Marsalis, Anthony Davis, August Wilson, Warrington Hudlin, Joan Armatrading, and Lisa and Kelly Jones as representatives of a new generation who, commencing with the publication in 1978 of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (for Ellis a founding gesture) "no longer need to deny or suppress any part of our complicated and sometimes contradictory

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cultural baggage to please either white people or black. The culturally mulatto *Cosby* girls are equally as black as a black teenage welfare mother." ("The New Black Aesthetic," *Before Columbus Review*, May 14, 1989). And Ellis is right: something quite new is afoot in African-American letters.

In a recent *New York Times Book Review* of Maxine Hong Kingston's new novel, Le Anne Schreiber remarks: "Wittman Ah Singh can't be Chinese even if he wants to be. . . . He is American, as American as Jack Kerouac or James Baldwin or Allen Ginsberg . . ." I remember a time, not so very long ago, when almost no one would have thought of James Baldwin as typifying the "American." I think that even James Baldwin would have been surprised. Certainly since 1950, the meanings of blackness, as manifested in the literary tradition, have come full circle.

Consider the holy male trinity of the black tradition: Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin. For Richard Wright, "the color curtain"—as he titled a book on the Bandung Conference in 1955 when "the Third World" was born—was something to be rent asunder by something he vaguely called the "Enlightenment." (It never occurred to Wright, apparently, that the sublime gains in intellection in the Enlightenment took place simultaneously with the slave trade in African human beings, which generated an unprecedented degree of wealth and an unprecedentedly large leisure and intellectual class.) Wright was hardly sentimental about Black Africa and the Third World—he actually told the first Conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956 that colonialism had been "liberating, since it smashed old traditions and destroyed old gods, freeing Africans from the 'rot' of their past," their "irrational past" (James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*). Despite the audacity of this claim, however, Wright saw himself as chosen "in some way to inject into the American consciousness" a cognizance of "other people's mores or national habits" ("I Choose Exile," unpublished essay). Wright claimed that he was "split": "I'm black. I'm a man of the West. . . . I see and understand the non- or anti-Western point of view. . . ." But, Wright confesses, "when I look out upon the vast stretches of this earth inhabited by brown, black and yellow men . . . my reactions and attitudes are those of the West" (*White Man, Listen!*). Wright never had clearer insight into himself, although his unrelentingly critical view of Third World cultures will certainly not make him required reading among those of us bent upon decentering the canon.

James Baldwin, who parodied Wright's 1956 speech in *Nobody Knows My Name,* concluded that "this was, perhaps, a tactless way of phrasing a debatable idea. . . ." Blackness, for Baldwin, was a sign, a sign that signified through the salvation of the "gospel impulse," as Craig Werner characterizes it, seen in his refusal "to create demons, to simplify the other in a way that would inevitably force him to simplify himself. . . . The gospel impulse—its refusal to accept oppositional thought; its complex sense of presence; its belief in salvation—sounds in Baldwin's voice no matter what his particular vocabulary at a particular moment." (Craig Werner, "James Baldwin: Politics and the Gospel Impulse," *New Politics* [Winter 1989].) Blackness, if it would be anything, stood as the saving grace of both white *and* black America.

Ralph Ellison, ever the trickster, felt it incumbent upon him to show that blackness was a metaphor of the human condition, and yet to do so through a faithful adherence to its particularity. Nowhere is this idea rendered more brilliantly than in his sermon "The Blackness of Blackness," the tradition's classic critique of blackness as an essence:

> "Brothers and sisters, my text this morning is the 'Blackness of Blackness.' "
>
> And a congregation of voices answered: "That blackness is most black, brother, most black . . ."
>
> "In the beginning . . ."
>
> "At the very start," they cried.
>
> ". . . there was blackness . . ."
>
> "Preach it . . ."
>
> ". . . and the sun . . ."
>
> "The sun, Lawd . . ."
>
> ". . . was bloody red . . ."
>
> "Red . . ."
>
> "Now black is . . ." the preacher shouted.
>
> "Bloody . . ."
>
> "I said black is . . ."

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"Preach it, brother . . ."
". . . an' black ain't . . ."
"Red, Lawd, red: He said it's red!"
"Amen, brother . . ."
"Black will git you . . ."
"Yes, it will . . ."
". . . an' black won't . . ."
"Naw, it won't!"
"It do . . ."
"It do, Lawd . . ."
". . . an' it don't."
"Hallelujah . . ."
"It'll put you, glory, glory, Oh my Lawd, in the WHALE'S BELLY."
"Preach it, dear brother . . ."
". . . an' make you tempt . . ."
"Good God a-mighty!"
"Old aunt Nelly!"
"Black will make you . . ."
"Black . . ."
". . . or black will un-make you."
"Ain't it the truth, Lawd?"

(Ellison, *Invisible Man*)

Ellison parodies the idea that blackness can underwrite a metaphysics or even a negative theology; that it can exist outside and independent of its representation.

And it is out of this discursive melee that so much contemporary African-American literature has developed.

The range of representations of the meanings of blackness among the post-*Song of Solomon* (1978) era of black writing can be characterized—for the sake of convenience—by the works of C. Eric Lincoln (*The Avenue, Clayton City*), Trey Ellis's manifesto, "The New Black Aesthetic," and Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* in many ways the ur-text of the African-American experience.

Each of these writers epitomizes the points of a post–Black Aesthetic triangle, made up of the realistic representation of black vernacular culture: the attempt to preserve it for a younger generation (Lincoln), the critique through parody of the essentialism of the Black Aesthetic (Ellis), and the transcendence of the ultimate horror of the black past—slavery—through myth and the supernatural (Morrison).

The first chapter of Eric Lincoln's first novel, *The Avenue, Clayton City* (1988), contains an extended recreation of the African-American ritual of signifying, which is also known as "talking that talk," "the dozens," "nasty talk," and so on. To render the dozens in such wonderful detail, of course, is a crucial manner of preserving it in the written cultural memory of African-Americans. This important impulse to preserve (by recording) the vernacular links Lincoln's work directly to that of Zora Neale Hurston. Following the depiction of the ritual exchange, the narrator of the novel analyzes its import in the following way:

> But it was playing the dozens that perplexed and worried Dr. Tait the most of all when he first tuned in on what went on under the streetlight. Surely it required the grossest level of depravity to indulge in such willful vulgarity. He had thought at first that Guts Gallimore's appraisal of talking that talk as "nasty" was too generous to be useful. . . . But the truth of the matter was that in spite of his disgust, the twin insights of agony and intellection had eventually paid off, for suddenly not only the language but the logic of the whole streetlight ritual finally became clear to him. What he was observing from the safety and the anonymity of his cloistered front porch was nothing less than a teenage rite of passage. A very critical *black* rite of passage! How could he not have recognized it for so long? The public deprecation of black men and women was, of course, taken for granted in Clayton City, and everywhere else within the experience of the Flame Gang. But when those black men and women were one's fathers, mothers, and sisters, how could one approaching manhood accept that deprecation and live with it? To be a *man* implied responsibilities no colored man in Clayton City could meet, so the best way to deal with the contradiction was to deny it. Talkin' that talk—that is, disparaging one's loved ones within the in-group—was an obvious expression of self-hatred, but it also undercut the white man's style of black denigration by presupposing it, and to some degree narcotizing the black boys who were on the way to manhood from the pain of their impotence. After all, *they had said it first!* Playing the dozens, Tait reasoned, was an effort to prepare one to be able to "take it." Anyone who refused to play the dozens was unrealistic, for the dozens were a fact of life for every black man. They were implicit in the very structure of black-white relations, and if one didn't "play," he could "pat his foot" while the play went on, over and around him. No one could exempt himself

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from the cultural vulgarity of black debasement, no matter how offensive it might be.

Trey Ellis, whose first novel, *Platitudes*, is a satire on contemporary black cultural politics, is an heir of Ishmael Reed, the tradition's great satirist. Ellis describes the relation of what he calls "The New Black Aesthetic" (NBA) to the black nationalism of the sixties, engaged as it is in the necessary task of critique and revision:

> Yet ironically, a telltale sign of the work of the NBA is our parodying of the black nationalist movement: Eddie Murphy, 26, and his old *Saturday Night Live* character, prison poet Tyrone Green, with his hilariously awful angry black poem, "Cill [sic] My Landlord," ("See his dog Do he bite?"); fellow Black Packer Keenan Wayans' upcoming blaxploitation parody *I'ma Get You Sucka!*; playwright George Wolfe, and his parodies of both "A Raisin in the Sun" and "For Colored Girls . . ." in his hit play "The Colored Museum" ("Enter Walter-Lee-Beau-Willie-Jones. . . . His brow is heavy from 300 years of oppression."); filmmaker Reginald Hudlin, 25, and his sacrilegious *Reggie's World of Soul* with its fake commercial for a back scratcher, spatula and toilet bowl brush all with black clenched fists for their handle ends; and Lisa Jones' character Clean Mama King who is available for both sit-ins and film walk-ons. There is now such a strong and vast body of great black work that the corny or mediocre doesn't need to be coddled. NBA artists aren't afraid to publicly flout the official, positivist black party line.

This generation, Ellis continues, cares less about what white people think than any other in the history of Africans in this country. "The New Black Aesthetic says you just have to *be* natural, you don't necessarily have to *wear* one."

Ellis dates the beginning of this cultural movement with the publication of *Song of Solomon* in 1978. Morrison's blend of magical realism and African-American mythology proved compelling: This brilliantly rendered book was an overnight bestseller. Her greatest artistic achievement, however, and most controversial, is her most recent novel, *Beloved,* which won the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

In *Beloved,* Morrison has found a language that gives voice to the unspeakable horror and terror of the black past, our enslavement in the New World. Indeed, the novel is an allegorical representation of this very unspeakability. It is one of the few treatments of slavery that escapes the pitfalls of *kitsch*. Toni Morrison's genius is that she has found a language by which to thematize this very unspeakability of slavery.

> Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don't know her name? Although she has claim, she is not claimed. In the place where long grass opens, the girl who waited to be loved and cry shame erupts into her separate parts, to make it easy for the chewing laughter to swallow her all away.
>
> It was not a story to pass on.
>
> They forgot her like a bad dream. After they made up their tales, shaped and decorated them, those that saw her that day on the porch quickly and deliberately forgot her. It took longer for those who had spoken to her, lived with her, fallen in love with her, to forget, until they realized they couldn't remember or repeat a single thing she said, and began to believe that, other than what they themselves were thinking, she hadn't said anything at all. So, in the end, they forgot her too. Remembering seemed unwise. They never knew where or why she crouched, or whose was the underwater face she needed like that. Where the memory of the smile under her chin might have been and was not, a latch latched and lichen attached its apple-green bloom to the metal. What made her think her fingernails could open locks the rain rained on?
>
> It was not a story to pass on.

Only by stepping outside of the limitations of realism and entering a realm of myth could Morrison, a century after its abolition, give a voice to the silence of enslavement.

For these writers, in their various ways, the challenge of the black creative intelligence is no longer to *posit* blackness, as it was in the Black Arts movement of the sixties, but to render it. Their goal seems to be to create a fiction *beyond* the colorline, one that takes the blackness of the culture for granted, as a springboard to write about those human emotions that we share with everyone else, and that we have always shared with each other, when no white people are around. They seem

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intent, paradoxically, in escaping the very banality of blackness that we encountered in so much Black Arts poetry, by *assuming* it as a legitimate grounds for the creation of art.

To declare that race is a trope, however, is not to deny its palpable force in the life of every African-American who tries to function every day in a still very racist America. In the face of Anthony Appiah's and my own critique of what we might think of as "black essentialism," Houston Baker demands that we remember what we might characterize as the "taxi fallacy."

Houston, Anthony, and I emerge from the splendid isolation of the Schomburg Library, and stand together on the corner of 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard attempting to hail a taxi to return to the Yale Club. With the taxis shooting by us as if we did not exist, Anthony and I cry out in perplexity: "But sir, it's only a trope."

If only that's *all* it was.

My father, who recently enjoyed his seventy-sixth birthday, and I attended a basketball game at Duke this past winter. It wasn't just any game; it was "the" game with North Carolina, the ultimate rivalry in American basketball competition. At a crucial juncture of the game, one of the overly avid Duke fans bellowing in our section of the auditorium called J.R. Reid, the Carolina center, "rubber lips."

"Did you hear what he said?" I asked my father, who wears *two* hearing aids.

"I heard it. Ignore it, boy."

"I can't, Pop," I replied. Then, loud-talking all the way, I informed the crowd, while ostensibly talking only to my father, that we'd come too far to put up with shit like this, that Martin Luther King didn't die in vain, and we won't tolerate this kind of racism again, etc., etc., etc. Then I stood up and told the guy not to say those words ever again.

You could have cut the silence in our section of that auditorium with a knife. After a long silence, my Dad leaned over and whispered to me, "Nigger, is you *crazy*? We am in de Souf." We both burst into laughter.

Even in the South, though, the intrusion of race into our lives usually takes more benign forms. One day my wife and father came to lunch at the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, where I'm currently a fellow. The following day, the only black member of the staff cornered me and said that the kitchen staff had a bet, and that I was the only person who could resolve it. Shoot, I said. "Okay," he said. "The bet is that your Daddy is Mediterranean—Greek or Eye-talian, and your wife is High Yellow." "No," I said, "it's the other way around; my Dad is black; my wife is white."

"Oh, yeah," he said, after a long pause, looking at me through the eyes of the race when one of us is being "sadiddy," or telling some kind of racial lie. "You, know, *brother*," he said to me in a low but pointed whisper, "we black people got ways to *tell* these things, you know." Then he looked at me to see if I was ready to confess the truth. Indeterminacy had come home to greet me.

What, finally, is the meaning of blackness for my generation of African-American scholars? I think that many of us are trying to work, rather self-consciously, within the tradition. It has taken white administrators far too long to realize that the recruitment of black faculty members is vastly easier at those institutions with the strongest black studies departments, or at least with the strongest representation of other black faculty. Why? I think the reason for this is that many of us wish to be a part of a community, of something "larger" than ourselves, escaping the splendid isolation of our studies. What can be lonelier than research, except perhaps the terror of the blank page (or computer screen)? Few of us—and I mean *very* few—wish to be the "only one" in town. I want my own children to grow up in the home of intellectuals, but with black middle-class values as common to them as the air they breathe. This I cannot achieve alone. I seek out, eagerly, the company of other African-American academics who have paid their dues, who understand the costs, and the pleasures, of achievement, who care about "the race," and who are determined to leave a legacy of self-defense against racism in all of its pernicious forms.

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Part of this effort to achieve a sense of community is understanding that our generation of scholars is just an extension of other generations, of "many thousands gone." We are no smarter than they; we are just a bit more fortunate, in some ways, the accident of birth enabling us to teach at "white" research institutions, when two generations before we would have been teaching at black schools, overworked and underfunded. Most of us define ourselves as extensions of the tradition of scholarship and academic excellence epitomized by figures such as J. Saunders Redding, John Hope Franklin, and St. Clair Drake, merely to list a few names. But how are we *different* from them?

A few months ago I heard Cornel West deliver a memorial lecture in honor of James Snead, a brilliant literary critic who died of cancer this past spring at the age of thirty-five. Snead graduated valedictorian of his class at Exeter, then summa cum laude at Yale. Fluent in German, he wrote his Scholar of the House "essay" on the uses of repetition in Thomas Mann and William Faulkner. (Actually, this "essay" amounted to some six hundred pages, and the appendices were written in German.) He was also a jazz pianist and composer and worked as an investment banker in West Germany, after he took the Ph.D. in English literature at the University of Cambridge. Snead was a remarkable man.

West, near the end of his memorial lecture, told his audience that he had been discussing Snead's life and times with St. Clair Drake, as Drake lay in bed in a hospital recovering from a mild stroke that he had experienced on a flight from San Francisco to Princeton where Drake was to lecture. When West met the plane at the airport, he rushed Drake to the hospital, and sat with him through much of the weekend.

West told Drake how Snead was, yes, a solid race man, how he loved the tradition, and wrote about it, but that his real goal was to redefine *American studies* from the vantage point of African-American concepts and principles. For Snead, taking the black mountaintop was not enough; he wanted the entire mountain range. "There is much about Dr. Snead that I can understand," Drake told West. "But then again," he concluded, "there is something about his enterprise that is quite unlike ours." Our next move within the academy, our next gesture, is to redefine the whole, simultaneously institutionalizing African-American studies. The idea that African-American culture was exclusively a thing apart, separate from the whole, having no influence on the shape and shaping of American culture, is a racialist fiction. There can be no doubt that the successful attempts to "decenter" the canon stem in part from the impact that black studies programs have had upon traditional notions of the "teachable," upon what, properly, constitutes the universe of knowledge that the well-educated should know. For us, and for the students that we train, the complex meaning of blackness is a vision of America, a refracted image in the American looking-glass.

Snead's project, and Ellis's—the project of a new generation of writers and scholars—is about transcending the I-got-mine parochialism of a desperate era. It looks beyond that overworked masterplot of victims and victimizers so carefully scripted in the cultural dominant, beyond the paranoid dream of cultural autarky, and beyond the seductive ensolacements of nationalism. Their story—and it is a new story—is about elective affinities, unburdened by an ideology of descent; it speaks of blackness without blood. And this *is* a story to pass on. □

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Norman Hill

BLACKS AND THE UNIONS

Progress Made, Problems Ahead

For the better part of a century following the abolition of slavery blacks continued to play an unenviable role within the labor force. Because they were excluded to a considerable degree from the unions by racial practices, both black leaders and the masses of black workers had little use for the labor movement; some regarded employers as their best allies. But these ostensible allies took advantage of the racial rift within the work force to use blacks as a cheap alternative to white labor and as scabs to break the strikes of lily-white unions.

Over the last fifty to sixty years the relationship between black labor and the union movement has changed drastically. The change can be said to have begun with A. Philip Randolph's successful work, starting in 1925, in organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. First, this helped to create a more positive attitude toward unions within the black community. Second, the admission of the Brotherhood into the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1928 gave Randolph a base for attacking racial discrimination within the union movement—an opportunity that Randolph used persistently.

The great drive of the 1930s to organize semiskilled and unskilled workers into industrial unions played a crucial role in reshaping the black-union relationship. Since industrial labor was easier to replace than the more skilled labor of the AFL craft unions, the common interest of black and white workers was unmistakably clear, and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) organized millions of workers without regard to race.

Another major factor transforming the relationship of blacks to the trade unions was the civil rights movement. By the early 1960s organized labor was the staunchest institutional supporter of civil rights legislation apart from the civil rights movement itself, and it was also working to eliminate discrimination within its own ranks.

Recent data show how far blacks have progressed. The change is most striking in the case of the craft unions. Even into the 1960s exclusionary practices based on race were common in these unions. By the end of the decade, substantial change had begun.

Integrating Craft Unions

A recent study of one large (unidentified) craft union apprentice program found that disparities in acceptance rates for black and white applicants were eliminated as early as the end of 1969, following demonstrations and negotiations. In subsequent years, as an expansionary climate gave way to a decline in labor demand, affirmative action plans may have helped to keep this change intact.[1]

The great majority of craft unions cannot, of course, claim to have eliminated racial discrimination so early, but a 1979 study of minorities in New York City construction unions concluded that "the growth of participation by minorities in union-sponsored apprenticeship programs in the construction industry has been rather dramatic." Minority group participation in the programs, which was negligible in the mid-1960s, had increased to 19.7 percent in 1973 and to 29.5 percent in 1978. (In 1978, blacks accounted for 59 percent of the minorities.) Minorities accounted for 15.5

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percent of the apprenticeship program graduates in 1973 and 29.9 percent in 1979.

Minorities were statistically overrepresented among the 1977 and 1978 (the years cited in the study) program graduates who received work in the union sector of the New York construction industry. For minority graduates, 76.5 percent of the 1977 class and 92.9 percent of the 1978 class obtained such work; the corresponding figures for nonminority graduates are 61.2 percent and 84.8 percent. Among 1977 graduates, nonminorities averaged 14.3 percent more weeks of union sector construction work in 1978 than did minorities; but among 1978 graduates, minorities averaged 2.1 percent more weeks of such work than nonminorities from the time they received their journeyman cards to July 1979.[2]

A 1986 article in the NAACP's journal, the *Crisis*, cites continuing discrimination in what it calls "the elite mechanical and precision craft trade unions of electricians, plumbers, sheet metal workers and elevator workers."[3] (Presumably, "elite" connotes the highest paying crafts.) Even this article, however, notes gains in these trades. It cites Bureau of Labor Statistics figures showing that nonwhite electricians accounted for 1.5 percent of employed electricians in 1960, while blacks accounted for 3 percent of employed electricians in 1970 and 4.8 percent in 1980. (The gain is greater than might appear at first glance, since the 1960 figure is for all nonwhites while the 1970 and 1980 figures represent only blacks.) Overall, in the early 1960s fewer than 2 percent of federally registered apprenticeship trainees were nonwhite, while today the percentage is 19.7 percent.[4]

Much of the progress recorded by blacks in the craft unions has been attributed to federally funded programs in the late 1960s that involved cooperation between black-oriented organizations and the unions themselves. Funded by the Department of Labor, these programs have involved three organizations: the Recruitment and Training Program (RTP) initiated by A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin and associated with the Workers Defense League and the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, the Labor Education and Advancement Program (LEAP) operated by the Urban League, and the Human Resources Development Institute operated by the AFL-CIO.

Some 100,000 minority apprentices were placed, with an extraordinarily high retention rate of 80 percent (The normal rate is 50 percent.) It should be stressed that these programs were carried out in cooperation with, not against the wishes of, both the AFL-CIO and individual unions.

New Black Union Status

Today blacks are statistically overrepresented in the union movement. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that in 1987 blacks accounted for 2.445 million of the nation's 16.9 million union members, or 14.5 percent of the total, although blacks constituted only about 11 percent of the general population. Also, 1987 figures show that 22.6 percent of employed blacks are union members, compared to 16.3 percent of whites. Blacks also appear to benefit more from union membership. In 1987, black union workers earned an average of $387 per week, 51.8 percent more than black nonunion workers, who averaged only $255 per week. White union workers averaged $458 per week, 35.5 percent more than white nonunion workers, who averaged $338 per week. (For Hispanics, the differential was 52 percent.)[5]

Unions improve the overall relative economic position of blacks because they not only reduce the wage disparities but also reduce the racial disparity in employment levels. This has been shown by a 1987 regression model analysis of the impact of right-to-work (RTW) legislation on the relative employment position of blacks. Since RTW legislation has been shown to curtail union growth, which in turn has a negative effect on relative black wages, the issue becomes whether such legislation benefits blacks by creating relative employment gains. The study concludes that the positive relative employment impact of RTW laws for blacks is not large enough to compensate for its negative relative wage impact. In fact, it appears that these laws have a negative relative impact on black employment levels![6] The

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converse, of course, is that unions raise relative black employment levels as well as relative black wages.

Overall, black workers are much more positive about unions than white workers. This finding was reported by Richard Freeman and James Medoff in *What Do Unions Do?* (New York: Basic Books, 1984) from the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey. Some 69 percent of nonwhite workers not represented by unions favor a union in their workplace, compared to only 29 percent of white workers. Furthermore, the 1977 survey shows a good satisfaction rate among black union workers—69 percent reporting "somewhat satisfied," 14 percent "very satisfied," and only 24 percent reporting "not too or not-at-all satisfied."

One more dimension of the black-union connection should be examined and that is the extent to which blacks play an active role within organized labor. At the national level, three of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's thirty-five members are black—an underrepresentation of blacks. On the other hand, four of the AFL-CIO's twelve regional directors are black. In addition, blacks are at the head of five national unions: Associated Actors and Artistes of America, the American Federation of Government Employees, the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, and the Federation of Professional Athletes. Blacks serve as secretary-treasurer in two unions: American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and Transport Workers Union of America. There are major black officeholders in the United Steelworkers of America, the Service Employees International Union, the Communications Workers of America, and the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, among other national unions.

A 1987 report shows much more black participation in local unions than previously supposed. Unlike earlier studies, this one includes rank-and-file members as well as leaders. It also examines a wider range of measures of union participation, including past or present service as an officer or bargaining committee member, participation in union elections, strike and contract votes, reading the union paper, and such informal participation as involvement in union political activity and educational programs and in strike activity.

Results were obtained through a 1980 survey of two thousand randomly selected members of a public-sector union at various sites who work for an Illinois state agency. The data show that black union members participate about as much as white members, with blacks tending to participate more than whites in informal activities while whites participate somewhat more in the formal ones. Those conducting the study hypothesize that as racial barriers come down, blacks first participate in the informal activities and that as they gain benefits, they move on to the formal ones. The only discovery that concerns the authors is that blacks serve significantly less often as local union president. This, they conclude, may represent the same barrier to the top that blacks face in business and politics.[7] Be that as it may, it is clear that by the bulk of relevant indices, blacks play a greater role in the trade union movement than in just about any other major institution in America that is not specifically black oriented.

The black presence in the union movement can be expected to grow. With the white baby boom generation now of working age, the black population is considerably younger than the white. Because of this and the higher black fertility rate, the black labor force should increase at almost double the white rate in the immediate future.[8] And the best prospects for union growth are in geographical and occupational areas in which blacks are found in large numbers. The South is the most promising region and it is in the South that blacks are the highest proportion of the population. Private-sector service industries such as health care will be a prime area for unionizing, and here, too, blacks are significantly represented.

Blacks in the Postindustrial Job Market

What is the significance of the fact that blacks are increasingly enjoying the benefits of union membership? In the broadest sense, it means that the interests of black workers are less and

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less hostage to racial discrimination and more and more entwined with the well-being of organized labor as a whole.

This does not mean that black workers no longer have any special concerns. Blacks must be disturbed about the fact that under the Reagan administration they lost economic ground relative to whites. According to a 1988 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report, *Still Far from the Dream: Recent Developments in Black Income, Employment and Poverty,* in 1987 the income of the typical black family was $18,098. That is only 56.1 percent of the average white family's income, the lowest percentage since 1967. And the proportion of blacks living in poverty jumped between 1986 and 1988 from 31.1 percent to 33.1 percent, while the percentage for whites during the same period declined from 11 percent to 10.5 percent. Doubtless, specifically antiblack policies such as lax civil rights enforcement and the defunding of social programs largely account for this relative shift.

More and more, though, blacks are being hurt by the same problems that hurt other modest and low-income Americans. As indicated by the Economic Policy Institute's 1988 report, *The State of Working America,* living standards for wage earners regardless of race stagnated during the Reagan administration. The real income of single-wage-earner families was down about 5 percent and real hourly wages declined by 7 percent from 1979 to 1987. And the declining rate of unionization is one of the factors responsible (a decline in turn partially attributable to such administration actions as the appointment of antilabor members to the National Labor Relations Board and the firing of PATCO strikers).

At this point in our history black and white workers are both hurting, only blacks more so. Rapid and deep structural changes in the economy are occurring. In the face of intense foreign competition, many American industrial enterprises have gone out of business or moved abroad. This, combined with the impact of technological advances, has eliminated millions of well-paying manufacturing jobs, most of which had been covered by union contracts. These are precisely the jobs that historically have been the vehicle that brought working people into the middle-income mainstream of American life. As economist Bernard Anderson has observed, of the 5.1 million adults who lost manufacturing jobs between 1979 and 1984, 600,000 were black.[9]

Two types of jobs have increased in number, but neither has been of much help to blacks displaced from manufacturing. First, technological developments such as computerization have created high-skill, information-based professional jobs for which these black workers are not educationally qualified. Second, the number of low-skill jobs in the service sector has increased. But these are usually low paying and nonunion jobs that provide little employment security. Often the jobs are part-time and offer no health care or opportunities for advancement.

These shifts in the labor market jeopardize further black progress. But it is crucial to understand that this problem, while hurting blacks severely, has had a great effect on many workers of all races and must be tackled not as a race issue but as an economic issue affecting millions of Americans.

Looking Ahead

Since blacks play such a large—and growing—role in the labor movement, the unions are the most appropriate place within which to press for an agenda for change.

Just what should that agenda be? Unions will have to gear themselves to organizing and representing a rapidly growing number of workers in low-paying, low-skill, boring, and frequently part-time jobs in the service sector. Unions will have to work hard to meet the reasonable expectations of these poorly paid workers for continuing wage increases and to secure part-time workers at least partial health care and other benefits.

At the political level, unions should work in coalition with other organizations to lobby the federal government for action against economic and social ills. The agenda should include fair-trade policies to halt the hemorrhaging of manufacturing jobs. We must also press for a national commitment to excellence in education

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and for federal programs in vocational and job training. For the chronically employed underclass, more than the availability of education is needed to break the cycle of unemployment. Money and creativity will have to go into social programs to attack homelessness, family dissolution, crime, and other social problems associated with the underclass—and these are not only the problems of blacks but of all the poor.

What are the prospects for the achievement of such an agenda? Some cynics say it can't be achieved, arguing that when blacks enter an organization, whites leave. They point to so-called white flight from the Democratic party as their prime exhibit.

But the union movement gives the lie to this view. Black and white workers link up effectively within trade unions because their common economic interest is so clear. This can happen at the political level, too. Consider the fact that in November 1988 in Mississippi black U.S. representative Mike Espy was reelected with 66 percent of the vote and 40 percent of the white vote. Asked why he won so much of the white vote, Espy pointed to his record on economic issues and said: "If people are thinking about their pocketbooks, they often forget about their color." Also, consider the fact that in the presidential campaign, Mike Dukakis was unable to make headway until—too late—he began to orient his campaign around the traditional Democratic issues that have brought together working-class blacks and whites with the more liberal-minded section of the middle class in a winning coalition.

For unions to thrive they must take into account the large number of unorganized black workers and the growing percentage of blacks in the future work force. Black workers must continue to increase their union participation and help disseminate labor's agenda for economic justice in the black community. And the black-labor alliance must continue at the political level as the core of any progressive coalition. □

Notes

[1] Russell K. Schutt, "Craft Unions and Minorities," *Social Problems* 34(4):388, 397–98.

[2] Ruttenberg, Friedman, Kilgallon, Gutchess & Associates, *Minority Gains in New York Construction Jobs: Employment in the Unionized Sector of the Construction Industry by Members of Minority Groups Residing in New York City* (Washington, D.C.: 1979).

[3] Michael Emerson Howard III, "Black Hardhats and the Elite Craft Trade Unions," *Crisis* 93(8):26, October 1986.

[4] Norman Hill, "Forging a Partnership between Blacks and Unions," *Monthly Labor Review,* vol. 110, August 1987, p. 39.

[5] Larry T. Adams, "Union Membership of Wage and Salary Employees in 1987," *Current Wage Developments,* vol. 40, February 1988, p. 8.

[6] Paul W. Grimes, "Right-to-Work Legislation and the Economic Position of Black Workers," *Review of Black Political Economy* 15(4):79–88, Spring 1987.

[7] Michele M. Hoyman and Lamont Stallworth, "Participation in Local Unions: A Comparison of Black and White Members," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 40(3): 323–24, 330, April 1987.

[8] For a discussion of future trends, see Howard N. Fullerton, Jr. and John Tschetter, "The 1995 Labor Force: A Second Look," *Monthly Labor Review,* vol. 106, November 1983, pp. 4–6; Markley Roberts, "The Future Demographics of American Unionism," *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science,* vol. 473, May 1984, pp. 25–27, 31, 32; James L. Stern, "A Look Ahead at Public Sector Unionism," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* vol. 473, May 1984, pp. 165, 167; Hill, *op. cit.,* p. 39; and Alan Kistler, "Union Organizing: New Challenges and Prospects," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* Vol. 473, May 1984, p. 97.

[9] Bernard Anderson, "The Changing Workplace: Implications for Black Workers," in A. Philip Randolph Institute, *The Changing Economy and Unions: An Analysis and Program for the Black-Labor Alliance* (New York, 1987), p. 18.

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Jerry G. Watts

DILEMMAS OF BLACK INTELLECTUALS

What Role Should We Play?

The status of the Afro-American intellectual community has changed drastically during the last twenty years. As a result of the civil rights movement and the urban uprisings of the 1960s, predominantly white universities began to open their doors to black scholars. The hiring of black scholars occurred together with a substantial increase in the numbers of black students admitted into predominantly white colleges and universities. While not overstating the number, we must recognize that this crack in the door brought a new range of occupational options for the black academic elite.

The generation of black intellectuals who came of age during the 1930s (such as sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, political scientist Merze Tate, and education analyst Doxey Wilkerson) recognized that employment at white colleges was impossible for them. This restricted access to American academia did not stifle their intellectual ambitions, though it did, in some cases, hinder their intellectual productivity. The absurdity of the racist restrictions they had to face is highlighted in the fact that Frazier was granted his discipline's highest honor in 1948, the presidency of the American Sociological Association. Yet Frazier was never offered a position in a major, predominantly white university. The generation of black scholars immediately after Frazier's can be considered a "transitional" one. They began their careers while academic compartmentalization was strictly racist, only to have the doors of white academia open to them later on. Such figures include historian John Hope Franklin, psychologist Kenneth Clark, political scientist John Aubrey Davis, and anthropologist St. Clair Drake.

Black scholars who entered graduate school during the late 1960s formed the first generation of black academics that saw employment in predominantly white universities as a viable option. Subsequent generations of black graduate students, particularly the products of elite white colleges, may not have even entertained the thought of teaching at a predominantly black college.

The impact of this recent influx to predominantly white universities has been devastating to the predominantly black college. Not only do black colleges no longer attract the elite of the black scholarly community, they don't usually attract the black student elite. This flight from predominantly black colleges does not generally stem from a simple desire to be with whites, though black academics and students can be attracted by the status that comes from being associated with the prestige of these predominantly white institutions. Of course, we cannot overlook the direct linkage between prestige and "whiteness." Nevertheless, the most important reason behind the choices of black academics is the better facilities at many predominantly white institutions and the greater access to research funding these provide. When this "brain drain" is coupled with the tenuous financial status of most black colleges (except, perhaps, for a few private colleges such as Spellman and Hampton Institute and some of those receiving

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state funding) the crisis these colleges face is abundantly clear. Some of the black state-funded colleges, typically located in the South, are also under assault from legislatures precisely because they serve a black student body.

Exploiting the logic of racial integration, southern state legislatures are calling for the desegregation of black state colleges. This argument is particularly pernicious because in many of these states the white state-funded universities have substantially integrated only their athletic teams.

The New Role of Black Colleges

The decline of predominantly black colleges will have a devastating impact on the black community precisely because these colleges still produce the majority of college-educated blacks. Moreover, these institutions tend to attract a disproportionate number of ambitious but ill-educated black high school graduates. The quality of the education provided is often not actually of university caliber. Some of these colleges have attempted to deal with this situation by becoming, in effect, technocratic training schools. In many instances, students are specifically trained to assume administrative jobs at specific large corporations. Not only do some large corporations help to fund the costs of attending college; they provide the students with summer internships and guarantee them employment upon graduation. While such an education violates the traditional humanistic concerns of the liberal arts, it serves poor black students seeking upward mobility. We can empathize with and support the desire of these students for upward mobility, but we can only be frightened by how this corporate logic has penetrated our state educational institutions.

Due to the greater access of black graduates of white colleges to professional schools and upper-middle-class jobs, we have begun to see a schism within the black middle classes. This schism is linked to the racial identity of the institutions from which they were graduated. Black colleges have traditionally trained a disproportionate number of black school teachers, ministers, social workers, and middle-range civil servants. They will probably continue to do so in the near future. By graduating ill-educated persons—persons who will ultimately serve local black communities—black colleges may unwittingly help to reproduce a "quality-lag" in black America. I make this statement with a great deal of fear at being misunderstood.

Contemporary graduates of black colleges seem to perform quite well throughout the American job structure. Because many of the jobs that require a college degree do not really require a college-level education, we must always be mindful of the ways in which higher education serves to rationalize economic hierarchy. One need never have read the *Iliad* to function competently as a manager at Macy's.

The problem of a "quality lag" centers around an elite sector of black Americans who have not been encouraged to think critically about themselves and American society at large. The result is that a large black sector of college graduates appears to be too technocratic in outlook to provide the creative leadership that black American communities desperately need.

There are ways to alleviate this "negative" aspect of a black college education but, ultimately, it will take a quantity of funding that state and federal governments have not yet been willing to commit. Besides the obvious need for bettering the public schooling offered to blacks in the precollege years, state funding could help some black colleges to establish "experimental" five- or six-year B.A. programs. Such programs might provide the time necessary to bridge gaps in the education of poor black students.

Such qualitative problems facing black colleges are not openly discussed within black intellectual circles or the black middle class at large. While black educators and administrators recognize the need for increased financial support of black colleges (for instance, the United Negro College Fund and the Lou Rawls telethon) they often make the dubious claim that black colleges perform an "educational miracle" by taking ill-educated high school students and turning them into first-rate college graduates in four years. Until the black educated class overcomes its shame over the

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state of affairs of many (not all) black colleges and recognizes this to be part of the overall problem of being black in a racially inegalitarian society, the crisis will persist.

Marginalization of Black Students

Although the plight of students in black colleges can lead one to despair at America's willingness to sacrifice a segment of our population, the plight of black students at white colleges is problematic for different reasons. Black students can be found throughout predominantly white universities, but the numbers remain relatively small. At Wesleyan University, where I teach, sizable numbers of black students have graduated regularly since the early 1970s. Though Wesleyan has a better record of admitting and graduating black students than most elite colleges, a relatively stable number of black students have also been graduating from the Harvards, Yales, and large state universities during the same period. But we should not overstate the black student presence on these campuses. The numbers have declined in recent years as the federal government's enthusiasm for affirmative action programs has declined. Nor do numbers tell the complete story. At the University of California, Davis, where I taught during the early 1980s, sizable numbers of black students would be admitted each year but few would ever graduate. The dropout rate was phenomenal, but it was not reflected in the overall enrollment numbers as the admissions office would annually recruit a new crop of first-year black students.

Meanwhile, questions related to the qualitative status of black students continue to require attention. For example, blatantly racist assaults on black students increased drastically during the Reagan era. One needs only to read the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to see how widespread this phenomenon is. A still more insidious problem—rarely discussed publicly—centers around the willingness of too many white faculty members to abdicate intellectual responsibilities when confronting black students. Even at a so-called liberal institution like Wesleyan, it is rare to witness a black student being "taken under the wing" by a white faculty member. Although there is a popular notion that black students on white campuses often obtain a version of the "gentleman's C," it appears equally true, if not more probable, that the best of the black students in these environments are not given the same intellectual support that the best of the white students are granted. (When we recognize the general tendency in many universities to devalue teaching we must also conclude that even the best white students are often shortchanged.)

One outcome of the marginalization of black students within university life is that many talented black students graduate with little understanding of their authentic talents and possibilities. White colleges have failed to encourage black students intellectually. Many white faculty members have low expectations of their black students, given the stigma attached to affirmative-action admissions. And even the best elite colleges do admit some black students who are incapable of functioning intellectually at the institutions' normal level. The presence of such students only helps to legitimate the indifference of those in the faculty unconcerned about the education of black students. And then, black and white faculty committed to engaging black students intellectually are sometimes overwhelmed by the immensity of their task.

The problem of the qualitative status of black students in the intellectual life of white universities is intensified by the nonintellectual subculture in which most black students are raised. While I would say that most Wesleyan students are more interested in grades than in engaging ideas, I also know that one will find a disproportionately small number of black students among those who are intellectually inclined.

Education in black America has historically been premised on a utilitarian ethos, centered around the quest for economic security and upward mobility. Given the history of black Americans, this is quite understandable. Yet it hinders the development of a black intellectual community. Despite the fact that black students often justly complain about the small number of black faculty on campuses like Wesleyan, few think about forgoing the monetary rewards of a professional education in order to pursue a

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graduate education. This problem is getting worse despite the funding now available to black students seeking a graduate degree. Again, however, we must recognize that the small number of black academics does not explain why colleges like Wesleyan or, even, Harvard have so few black faculty members. These institutions can hardly claim they are restricted in the search for black faculty—given their ability to raid other universities should they so desire.

Parochial Black Intelligentsia

While the declining number of black students pursuing graduate school education bodes ill for the future of the black community, an equally ominous outlook is due to the parsimonious support of black intellectual activity by wealthy blacks. Though there have been several recent multimillion dollar gifts to black colleges by wealthy entertainers, rich blacks generally ignore the need for a black intellectual infrastructure.

At present we have no major black-funded think-tanks in the United States. Except for the narrowly focused *Black Scholar*, there exists no major black-funded and edited intellectual journal directed to a general learned black audience. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, John H. Johnson of *Ebony* funded such a journal, *Black World*. When he suspended publication, no black capitalists stepped forward to keep it alive. If *Black World* was often parochial, it was nonetheless an essential organ for young black intellectuals who came of age during the 1970s. Despite my strong disagreements with the nationalist ideology espoused by its editor, Hoyt Fuller, *Black World* provided a center of debate around which an entire generation of young black intellectuals coalesced.

In December 1988 I attended the conference on Jewish intellectual/religious progressivism sponsored by *Tikkun*. Though I was one of the very few blacks, I was elated to be there not only because of the political optimism surrounding the conference but because of the quality of its dialogue. Throughout, I carried on a silent dialogue with myself centering around moments of depression I felt at the thought that such a conference could not, at present, take place in the black community. It is not that the quality of thought displayed at the *Tikkun* conference could not have been reproduced at a black intellectual gathering. Instead, I was depressed at the realization that within the black community there was no generally recognized understanding of the *value* of such conferences. Blacks do sponsor academic conferences but we do not hold intellectual conferences that are directed to an interested, non-academic black audience.

Nor is there much reason to believe that such conferences would attract a sizable number of blacks from the nonacademic world. I have been to black conferences that included middle-class professionals—often organized by a civil rights group—but even these conferences rarely transcend a crass utilitarianism at best or cathartic ethnic cheerleading at worst. In the former instance, conferences are held to discuss ways to "solve," for instance, the poverty problem in black America. Such conferences assume that the only valid role of the black intellectual is as "problem solver." By definition such conferences exclude and by default invalidate the presence of black intellectuals working outside the arena of public policy analysis. On the other hand, one can easily mistake ethnic celebratory gatherings for social events, given their emphasis on fashion shows and high profile cabarets. It was precisely this latter phenomenon that Frazier so bitterly attacked in his *Black Bourgeoisie*.

It has long been baffling to me that an institution with the resources of Howard University in Washington D.C. has not taken an intellectual leadership role in developing a serious black intellectual infrastructure. The black community in the nation's capital should be the most studied black community in the world. It could be a "laboratory" much as Chicago was for Robert Park and his colleagues from the 1920s through the 1940s (and New Haven for Robert Dahl and his Yale colleagues during the 1960s). Yet, it isn't.

Much of the reason for Howard's weak research profile vis-à-vis the black community in Washington lies with the mediocre, anti-

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intellectual, autocratic leadership of its president, James Cheek. Yet, the responsibility for Howard's intellectual malaise ultimately lies with a university community that has tolerated a Cheek and with the United States Congress that oversees the only American university with its own line item in the federal budget. Howard is mentioned here only to show that the problems of a serious black intellectual community are not simply the result of an absence of resources. Even in those few instances where resources have been relatively plentiful, the black intellectual community has suffered from weak institutional leadership.

Finally, the contemporary weakness of the black intellectual infrastructure is particularly troubling given the fact that there have been moments in black history when black intellectual discourse did flourish. I am thinking now of Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s, when three major black intellectual organs were being published simultaneously. (The NAACP's *Crisis* edited by W.E.B. DuBois, the Urban League's *Opportunity,* edited by Charles Johnson, and the socialist *Messenger,* edited by Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph.) While the number of black intellectual, literary, and scholarly journals now being published probably exceeds the number published previously, it seems that the intended black audiences have become too specialized to sustain public intellectual discourse.

Impact of Parochial White Intellectuals

The reasons for the decline of black intellectual discourse directed to a generally sophisticated black audience are too numerous to discuss in a short essay. In many ways they are similar to those behind the decline in white male intellectual discourse chronicled by Russell Jacoby in *The Last Intellectuals*. Except for well-known black fiction writers, the black intellectual community has become disproportionately settled in the academy. With this comes a black intellectual community increasingly governed by the needs and mores of academic job mobility. Such intellectuals recognize that their economic existence depends less on an ability to generate critical dialogue in the black community than on their acceptance by white and black academic peers. Black public intellectual discourse suffers from the absence of an intellectually engaged journalistic community.

Those black intellectuals and academics who desire to write for a general intellectual audience have tended not to publish in black intellectual journals directed at a general audience. The access that black intellectuals have to general intellectual organs edited by whites has drastically increased during the past three decades. This turn to predominantly white journals is quite understandable given their larger circulations and greater prestige. Perhaps the earlier generations of black intellectuals who wrote for journals directed to a black audience did so as much because of ethnic intellectual engagement as because they were excluded from more prestigious white-edited journals. Even today, many of the latter tend to exclude or limit black contributors. The *New York Review of Books* has a pathetic record in this regard, except for one in-house writer who functions as a sort of black reviewer at-large. The *Nation*, which markets itself as a progressive journal, has not a single black staff writer or regular contributor. The absence of a black intellectual presence can also be seen in the pages of *Raritan,* the *Partisan Review, Salmagundi, Grand Street, Dissent,* and numerous other journals.

It really should not matter who edits the journal in which one publishes. Yet, those relatively few white-edited intellectual journals that are committed to regularly including black contributors tend to channel their black writers into a racial corner. That is, black writers are published provided they comment on issues related to blacks. White contributors can comment on all subjects, including those related to blacks. The steering of black writers into "black subjects" mirrors the compartmentalization of black academics in marginalized black studies programs. The devaluation of black scholars occurs simultaneously with the devaluation of "black subjects."

Far too many black intellectuals willingly support the limited opportunities afforded them by remaining within these racially constricted sectors. They have tended to view racial parochialism within the intellectual community

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as an aid to their efforts to cordon off a racially restricted job market. Black intellectuals with a more cosmopolitan self-definition, including some who write primarily about "black subjects," have had to walk an intellectual tightrope between the racial parochialisms of the black and white American intellectual communities.

My criticism of the racial parochialism of the American intellectual community does not imply that white-edited intellectual organs should publish any and every black writer who submits a manuscript. It is simply to point out that they should at least perceive the absence of black contributors as a matter worthy of concern. I realize that few general intellectual journals directed toward a broad learned American public can afford to commit the space and resources needed to intricately confront the myriad of issues facing black Americans. *Tikkun, Commentary, Midstream,* and *Present Tense* play a role in the American Jewish community that cannot be expected of the *Atlantic, American Scholar, Partisan Review*, or the *Public Interest*.

So the absence of a black version of *Commentary* or *Present Tense* means that black intellectuals who desire to reach a broader black public around issues of little concern to a white audience have no specific place in which to do so. The distance of the public-minded black intellectual from the larger black community is further heightened by the sheer demographics of black America. When we take into account the large number of blacks who are functionally illiterate, and add to this the sizable number with limited leisure time, the size of the potential black reading audience is severely reduced. If this is coupled with the anti-intellectual, consumerist ethic of substantial numbers of the black middle class, it is clear that the black public-minded intellectual has to devise alternative strategies for engaging in dialogue within the black community.

What Is To Be Done?

In response to the peculiar social status of black intellectuals, some black intellectuals, such as Cornel West, have followed the model of Martin Luther King, Jr. and others in attempting to use the black church as an intellectual setting. As a seminary professor at Union Theological Seminary, West was not only able to influence future black ministers but he frequently preached at black churches. Now that he is teaching philosophy at Princeton University, West's influence over the black ministry will undoubtedly decrease.

While the black church does not systematically foster a free intellectual dialogue, numerous black public intellectuals are now using the church to bring to black worshipers a range of ideas that they may not be exposed to otherwise. The problem here is that the black church does not facilitate feedback for the intellectual nor does it encourage the worshiper to critically enter into the dialogue. Nevertheless, some innovative things are being done. Under the direction of a black New Testament scholar, Professor Thomas Hoyt, Hartford Seminary, has established an outreach program in which undereducated and formally untrained black ministers are offered courses throughout the year. The goal is to increase black ministers' understanding of the Bible, Christian theology, and church administration. And the black ministers' desire for educational improvement has been surprisingly strong.

Other black intellectuals have attempted to graft themselves onto black political processes, particularly the two presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson. These intellectuals viewed Jackson's campaigns as indicators of an increased receptivity for black public dialogue. While this strategy may have worked during the actual Jackson campaigns, it appears quite difficult to sustain over time. For this reason, some black public intellectuals have been desperate for an institutionalization of the Rainbow Coalition.

Finally, many black public-minded intellectuals have decided that the only way effectively to reach the broader black populace lies in penetrating American mass culture and the mass media. They believe it is essential to appear on "public affairs" television shows directed to black audiences. They view the televised version of *The Women of Brewster Street* as being as significant, if not more so, than the publication of the book itself. The same can be said for the televised version of

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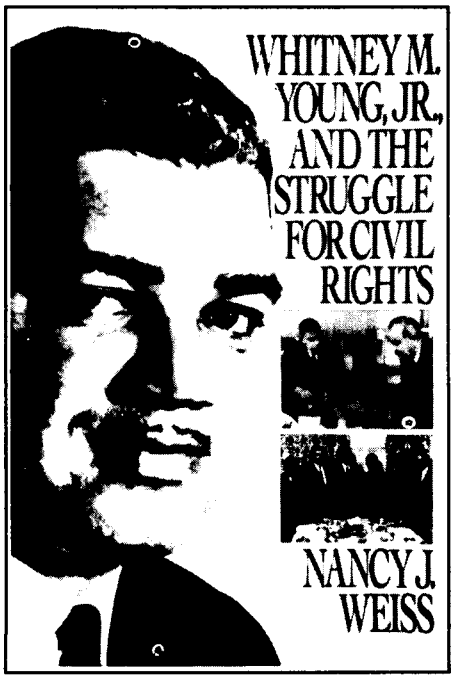
Roots and Steven Spielberg's production of *The Color Purple*.

These examples do not begin to exhaust the ways in which some black intellectuals have attempted to reach a broader black audience. It is an effort that carries some risk. Institutions that control public audiences can demand an unacceptable quid pro quo from those black intellectuals seeking to piggyback a ride. The cost of this ride might be too great for some intellectuals to bear precisely because it requires a redefinition (or abandonment) of their function as critics.

Finally, whatever anxiety I experience as a result of marginalization from the broader black community, I cannot become too self-consumed at my plight. After all, my writings will not feed the numerous black babies suffering from malnutrition. I cannot house the numerous black homeless. I cannot alter the ravaging of black life, such as drug abuse and drug-related violence. I cannot stop the utter human destruction now occurring throughout urban America. While I have some contributions to make to the betterment of black life, I can easily understand the low priority that many blacks give to my situation as an anxiety-ridden bourgeois black academic intellectual. The ultimate problem confronting black intellectuals centers around justifying our existence during a time when many blacks' needs are immediate, desperate, and yet disregarded by the American system. □

RACE, POWER, AND JUSTICE



Whitney M. Young, Jr., and the Struggle for Civil Rights

Nancy J. Weiss

Whitney M. Young, Jr., the charismatic executive director of the National Urban League from 1961 to 1971, bridged the worlds of race and power. The "inside man" of the black revolution, he served as interpreter between black America and the businessmen, foundation executives, and public officials who constituted the white power structure. In this stimulating biography, Nancy J. Weiss shows how Young accomplished what Jesse Jackson called the toughest job in the black movement: selling civil rights to the nation's most powerful whites.
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Loïc J.D. Wacquant

THE GHETTO, THE STATE, AND THE NEW CAPITALIST ECONOMY

People in ghettos don't create [the ghettos]. Those who have and don't give create them. Most people are prejudiced. Those on the outside just play games with poor people's lives. They try to keep a cage around poor people. They lie and say people don't want to work. First they push you on welfare, then they cut the programs. They don't realize they are cutting their own necks too.

Brick, young resident of Chicago's South Side.[1]

In the two decades since the urban riots of the mid-sixties, the black ghettos of large American cities have undergone a sharp deterioration.[2] The woes of the inner city are the result of profound changes in three interrelated sets of factors: the economic forces that impinge upon the urban core; the internal structure and societal position of the black population; and the public policies that mediate between them and help shape both. The relatively cohesive black community of the 1950s—itself the product of a unified historical experience stamped by the strict and often violent enforcement of a rigid color line—has given way to a deepening division between the relatively secure middle and working classes and an increasingly vulnerable and isolated segment of the minority poor.[3] To be sure, this is only part of a broader shift toward a hardening of class and racial cleavages in the late 1970s and 1980s, as the American economy replaced its crumbling industrial base by a plethora of low-wage and part-time jobs. Both of these trends were in turn abetted and aggravated by state retrenchment: By reneging on the promise of equality of access to housing and education, by limiting eligibility, and by rolling back sorely needed welfare programs, federal and local governments have contributed to the deepening and concentration of ghetto poverty.[4] All of these developments have hit the urban black poor with special brutality.

Conditions in Chicago's ghetto neighborhoods are emblematic of the dramatic changes that have swept through inner cities and undermined the "Black Metropolises" of yesteryear. I will first sketch the plight of this city's ghetto, then turn to examine the causes that are driving its fateful evolution, including epochal changes in the economy, failed public policies, and the retreat of the American "semi-welfare state" following the "new class war" waged by conservative forces over the past decade,[5] and the subsequent crumbling of public institutions such as low-income housing and schools. In the third part, I argue that this new configuration of forces—economic, social, and political—has effected an institutional transformation of the ghetto that effectively dooms ever-larger numbers of inner-city residents to prolonged social marginality and economic redundancy. I outline several dimen-

This paper in based in part on a lecture entitled "Capitalist Transformation and the Hyperghettoization of the Inner City," delivered at Harvard University in February of 1989. I would like to thank Paul Peterson and the Department of Government for their invitation, as well as the Franco-American Foundation for financial support through a Tocqueville Fellowship. The ideas and results presented here are an outgrowth of the joint work I have been doing with William Julius Wilson; I am therefore happy to record the privilege of his stimulation and intellectual influence. Although he may want to take issue with some of my analyses, they bear the mark of his thinking in more ways than I can acknowledge here.

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sions of this process of "hyperghettoization" that has ravaged the inner city before suggesting policy directions.

Life in Chicago's Ghetto Today

Author Studs Terkel has nicknamed Chicago's South Side and West Side the city's "Soweto." The sharp segregation and social dislocations visited upon these racial enclaves give him ample motive to do so. In the past three decades, they have harbored growing numbers of poor blacks despite rapid depopulation; their residents have suffered a reduction of real income, sharp increases in joblessness, and record rates of welfare receipt (even though the real dollar value of AFDC in the state was halved between 1970 and 1987). As of 1986-87, conditions in Chicago's ghetto continued to worsen in spite of the national economic recovery and reached unprecedented levels of hardship and deprivation (See Table 1).[6]

In the communities that make up the historic core of Chicago's Black Belt, most adults do not hold a job and only a tiny fraction of them (6 percent) enjoy employ in a white-collar, credentialed position. Half have not completed their high school education and six in ten are currently on the welfare rolls. Only 22 percent of the residents have never received their own public aid grant and 71 percent of them need at least one of six possible forms of food assistance to feed themselves and their family. Of those receiving welfare, fully one in five expect to remain on aid for a minimum of five years. Such depressing expectations flow from a realistic assessment of the paucity of economic and financial resources available to ghetto blacks in Chicago. Just over half of them live in a household that declared less than $7,500 of yearly income, and an overwhelming majority of 79 percent have experienced either a degradation or no improvement in their financial status in the previous three years, that is, during the supposedly sturdy economic growth of the mid-eighties. A mere 14 percent of them belong to a household with incomes above $25,000 per annum (compared to a national median annual income of $31,000 for white families and $18,000 for blacks). Barely one ghetto resident in ten has a current checking account and fewer than two in ten can afford to maintain a savings account. Three-fourths cannot claim to possess even a single one of the following financial assets: a personal checking or savings account, an individual retirement account or pension plan, stocks and bonds, or a prepaid burial. Owning a home and an automobile, two staples of the "American dream," also remain out of the reach of an overwhelming majority of ghetto blacks. And on most counts, black females are notably more disadvantaged than their male counterparts.

Table 1. Economic Exclusion and Deprivation in Chicago's Ghetto (1986–87)

Percentage	All respondents	Females
Class position		
not employed	61	69
working class	33	21
middle class	6	10
did not finish high school	51	50
Public aid		
on aid when a child	41	44
currently on aid	58	69
receives food stamps	60	70
Assets		
household income <$7,500	51	59
finances not improved or worse	79	80
has checking account	12	10
has savings account	18	14
household owns home	121	8
household owns a car	34	26

Source: Urban Poverty and Family Life Survey, 1987.

The degradation of the housing stock, of the transportation infrastructure, and of municipal services in the inner city, combined with rising levels of crime and street violence, have created conditions of living that are more evocative of a muffled civil war than of life in the richest land on the face of earth. A former Chicagoan explains:

> You couldn't give me a place in Chicago. . . . See, I was there when you could sleep in the park all night and nobody wouldn't bother your pocketbook. I was there when you could sleep with your door open and nobody would bother you. Now my sister's house is barred up like a jail. You go through about three iron doors before

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you can get inside the house. And they still come in. She put fifteen-hundred dollars' worth of bars around her room—these are wrought iron bars—and she's still afraid to stay at home.[7]

Jobs are so scarce that illegal activities have become the major source of employment and income in many ghetto neighborhoods. Asked what is the best way to get ahead in Chicago today, a young black dishwasher, who lives with his mother and four siblings in a cramped apartment in Grand Boulevard and struggles to survive on $4.85 an hour at a suburban job that offers no health coverage and no security (he has now been working three years running without a single day of vacation for fear of being dismissed), answers bitterly: "I hate to say it, but it, it look to me dealin' drugs, 'cause these guys [gestures to the outside where a band of youth gathered on a porch can be seen] make money out there. This is wrong, but! you know, uh . . . They make a lot of money, fast. It be a fast way." It is a common occurence for residents of this neighborhood, one of the poorest in the city, to find themselves out of cash. The consequence is that muggings and theft are routine in this section of Grand Boulevard: "Oh, man, some of them steal, some of them kill, uh. . . . It's hard to say, man: they probably do anything they can to get a dollar in their pocket. Robbin', prostitution, drug sale, anythin'. Oh, boy!".[8]

Public education in the ghetto has slumped to such lows that it merely serves to solidify the social and economic marginalization of most inner-city blacks. First, the system has become the near exclusive preserve of the most underprivileged categories of the urban population: The current enrollment of Chicago's public schools is over 82 percent black and Hispanic and 70 percent of all pupils come from families who live under the official poverty line. Second, educational failure is peaking at record levels: Barely 8 percent of the minority students who enrolled in ninth grade in non-selective segregated public high schools in Chicago in 1980 (and who represented two-thirds of the original class of 1984) graduated with nationally-average reading skills or better.[9] Shut out by the schools and unable to obtain legitimate employment, inner-city black males drop out of the labor market in droves, turn to hustling, crime, and to the underground economy: "The drugs are the only place our folk can get jobs or earn money. The other is to steal, knock open heads. Which is the lesser of the two evils, the drugs which is burning their brains out [or] knocking little old ladies in the head with their handbags?".[10]

Capital Mobility, the Deconcentration of Metropolitan Economies, and the Casualization of Labor

The plight of the ghetto is the outcome of a complex interaction of economic, social, and political factors and no monocausal theory will ever satisfactorily account for it. This being said, there is no denying that the accelerating decline of the inner city finds its deepest roots in the ongoing structural transformation of American capitalism. In the past four decades, the American economy has not only grown erratically, experiencing seven recession years and posting a secular increase in unemployment and stagnation in real wages; it has also undergone major sectoral, occupational, and spatial changes. Whether this marks the "end of organized capitalism," the exhaustion of the mass production paradigm, the transition to a "postindustrial" form of capitalism,[11] or one component of an inevitable cycle of economic "long waves" à la Kondratieff, there has occurred a recentering of the political economy of large American cities around services and credential-intensive industries, dispersed production sites, and high-velocity capital.

This *recomposition of the urban capitalist economy* has translated into massive job destruction in the very sectors that have traditionally supplied the brunt of the employment accessible to the minority poor, and upon which they continue to depend heavily owing to the failure of public schools to prepare them for higher qualification jobs. In Chicago, deindustrialization reached such magnitude that it has meant nothing short of an uninterrupted "Great Depression" for ghetto blacks. In 1954, over 10,200 manufacturing establishments were located within the city limits, providing nearly half a million blue-collar jobs (production workers up to and including foremen) and over 600,000 in total employment. By 1982, the

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Table 2. Deindustrialization in Chicago, 1954–1982

	1954	1967	1977	1982
Manufacturing establishments	10,288	8,455	6,378	5,203
Total manufacturing employment ($\times 10^3$)	616	546	366	277
Production workers in manufacturing ($\times 10^3$)	469	382	241	172
Employees per establishment	59.9	64.6	57.4	53.2
Production workers per establishment	45.6	45.2	37.8	33.0

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, *County and City Data Book* (Washington, D. C., G. P. O., various years).

number of mills and factories had been halved, their overall payroll had gone down 55 percent, and blue-collar jobs had decreased to 172,000, a staggering cut of 63 percent (see Table 2). Not only did some 5,000 factories close down or leave Chicago in this period; those that stayed on or developed there had a different occupational mix and a notably greater capital intensity, so that the number of employees per establishment dropped by 11 percent while the number of blue-collar jobs per firm declined sharply from 46 to 33 production workers on average (a 28 percent cut).[12] In the meantime, the industrial fabric of the suburbs and exurbs of Chicago was flourishing: from 1963 to 1982, the number of manufacturing establishments doubled to 8,700, one and a half-times the city figure.

This mass bleeding of industrial jobs in the central city was further amplified by a loss of trade employment (a 33 percent cut, from 332,000 down to 221,000 jobs) that the mild growth in selected services (an additional 55,000 jobs or + 46 percent, excluding health, financial, and social services in which few uneducated blacks find employ) could not offset. Urban blacks have been especially hard hit by this spatial and sectoral restructuring of the American economy because they have been disproportionately represented in those industries that have stagnated or declined, and in the central cities that have lost economic muscle. In 1950, fully one-third of all black workers in Chicago were operatives. In the core of the city's South Side, blue-collar workers (operatives, laborers, craftsmen and foremen combined) numbered over 42,000 and over half of all adults were employed; thirty years later, a mere 6,200 blue-collar workers remained and 73 percent of the residents were out of a job.

This displacement of manufacturing by service industries and the geographical relocation of firms is part of the globalization of production processes, the internationalization of competition, and the attenuation of regional economies. It has been immensely facilitated by the existence of large pools of cheap, docile labor in the international and national peripheries; by the fragmentation of the labor process that has made possible new forms of sourcing; and by technological innovation in the workplace and the reduction of the cost of transportation and electronic communication. It is important to recognize, however, that the accelerating spatial deconcentration and internal restructuring of the urban economy are by no means the result of a "biotic process" driven solely by the neutral mechanisms of the property and labor markets, as some of the proponents of the "mismatch" hypothesis would have us believe.[13] They result, rather, from the changing balance of power between classes and racial groups in the struggle over space, jobs, and political resources.

And in this struggle, the industrial and financial strategies pursued by corporations have had a heavy hand. Starting in the late sixties, U.S. corporations found their profit margins squeezed out by the pincer of increased foreign competition and rising domestic costs due to employee gains won through union bargaining and the new social legislation. Abetted by government policies of both Democratic and Republican administrations, they sought to recapture the rates of profit of the earlier era of U.S. economic hegemony by launching a systematic attack on wages, unions, and conditions of employment. "The way to cut labor costs, add flexibility to the production process, and reduce tax liability, was simple: move (or merely threaten to move)." This was done by shifting capital from one corporate division to another, by disinvesting in one industry to reinvest in another, and

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by relocating in those southern states with "right-to-work" legislation, to rural regions, or to cheap foreign production sites.[14] The proliferation of enterprise zones and subcontracting, the resurgence of sweatshops and domestic labor from the mid-seventies on, evidence these efforts to escape standard labor legislation and lower the wage bill.

The frantic mobility of capital that has come with the new "hegemonic-despotic" phase of American capitalist development,[15] in which organized labor is compelled to consent to the demands of firms under the threat of investment withdrawal, has brought about the peripheralization and recomposition of the core.[16] Corporations have used capital mobility as an instrument to force one group of workers to compete with another and even entire urban communities to scramble for competitive advantage. By thus exacting widespread wage concessions from weakened unions and freezes or cutbacks in salaries and effective tax rates, the corporate sector has set in a drastic and cumulative process of *casualization of employment*, whereby full-time jobs are reorganized into "contingent labor," typified by part-time, seasonal schedules, dwindling benefit packages and growing precariousness. This downward mobility of large fractions of the work force has increased competition to the detriment of the most vulnerable workers and would-be workers, namely, inner-city residents with little education and work experience. It has "hurt most those seeking their first jobs—young adults, particularly those who are black and facing greatly magnified competition by the rapid black concentration of this age segment in the central cities."[17]

Today, not only do labor markets remain strongly segmented racially, blocking the inter-sectoral movement and occupational reconversion of employed blacks and the penetration of new minority workers in certain service sectors.[18] We also observe a resurgence of racism at the bottom of the job ladder which hampers the efforts of inner-city blacks (and young black males in particular) to enter the labor force. In their report on the collapse of the steel industry in South Chicago, for instance, Bensman and Lynch note that "the impact on black steelworkers was even greater because the mills had been an even larger source of jobs for them. A study of former South Works employees found that far fewer blacks found jobs after being laid off from the mills than had their white counterparts."[19] In a series of interviews conducted by the Urban Poverty Project with a representative sample of Chicagoland employers, it was found that many directors of personnel express considerable reticence at the prospect of hiring young black men and openly acknowledge that they, or their colleagues, do not consider them fit for employment because of insufficient work ethic, education, or proper work experience.[20]

Racial exclusion also operates more visibly at the level of firm location, as part of the larger corporate strategy of union breakup and casualization of labor. Many expanding companies transfer their establishments out of central cities or locate new plants and offices in areas where few blacks live so that they can avail themselves of a predominantly white work force that will be more pliable and less likely to unionize (historically, blacks have often proved more prone to unionize and engage in collective action to defend their economic rights).[21] Many of these new forms of racial closure indirectly affect the inner city by shutting it out from economic development and are difficult to discern as they cloak themselves in the more acceptable and seemingly meritocratic language of class prejudice and lack of proper cultural credentials. Yet another indirect source of black stagnation in the ghetto has been the economic retrenchment of the state. Because the consolidation of the black middle class and stable working class has been largely assisted by the growth of public employment,[22] the rolling back of state and federal payrolls (for example in the post office) has also reduced access to legitimate channels of upward mobility out of the ghetto.

Public Policies and the Class/Racial Closure of the Inner City

But just as the trends that have metamorphosed the American economy are not wholly the product of a "natural," socially neutral necessity, the plight of today's inner city is not solely the result of blind, impersonal processes

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ordained by technology, ecology, or the autonomous workings of the market. While it would be preposterous to maintain that some authority has deliberately plotted to manufacture the current ghetto havoc, it would be equally naive to overlook the considerable degree of *historical and political agency* involved in its creation. Places or neighborhoods, understood as social entities, are *produced institutionally*, within ecological and technical constraints, by social and political struggles over competing uses of space, resources, and people. And no contemporary urban form demonstrates this more incontrovertibly than the black ghettos of America. Today's inner city is in good part the accumulated and contradictory product of the effects, intended and unintended, of the urban, educational, and social policies followed by federal, state, and local governments in the postwar era. And these policies have systematically weakened the position of the ghetto in the urban system.[23]

International comparison reveals that the United States is quite unique in the way it organizes land, granting far more independence and autonomy to local authorities and private developers than most other advanced nations. Yet urban planning does exist in this country, if in a somewhat more chaotic form than in Western European societies, and what exists has "been at the service of the growth machine."[24] Whether it be through regulatory programs (zoning, growth control, environmental impact reports, and so on) or federal incentives (public housing and urban renewal programs, urban development action grants, block grants and revenue sharing, tax increment redevelopment and industrial bonds), local and federal governments have pushed urban policies that have overwhelmingly benefited entrepreneurs, land rentiers, and other local and regional elites at the expense of poor residents. The combination of suburbanization and city incorporation patterns emphasizing home rule, for instance, has sufficed to create fiscal disparities that aggravate and entrench the geography of privilege and set off a vicious cycle that keeps fueling racial and class segregation in the metropolis.

Public policies in transportation and housing have been directly or indirectly instrumental in (re)creating and concentrating persistent poverty in the ghetto. As historian Kenneth Jackson has noted in his *Crabgrass Frontier*,[25] the de-urbanization of America was considerably aided by the Highway Act of 1956, which intensified the dispersal of urban residence and employment and accelerated the downward spiral of public transportation. Freeways in every major city cut through the middle of black settlements in order to connect the central business district to the outlying white suburbs or were deliberately planted as buffers to protect white neighborhoods from the "contamination" of the expanding ghetto (as did, and still does, the Dan Ryan expressway that shelters Mayor Daley's lily-white neighborhood of Bridgeport from the threat of Grand Boulevard). John Mollenkopf has highlighted federal responsibility in suburbanization through the subsidizing of suburban factories and home building. He has established that the National Housing Act of 1949, which was to have afforded "a decent home and a suitable living environment to every American," was in fact harnessed to serve the property investments of the urban establishment. The Federal Housing Authority channeled loans to whites to build housing in the suburbs while officially denying them to anyone who would unsettle the racial and class makeup of a locale. The ensuing 1954 Housing Act "oriented the urban renewal program toward central-city business interests and the needs of other dominant institutions like hospitals and universities."[26] This is particularly conspicuous in Chicago, where the primary beneficiaries of the "slum clearance" campaign included, *inter alia,* the large Loop business concerns, the Michael Reese Hospital, the New York Life Insurance Company, and the University of Chicago, all of which contributed to the destruction of surrounding black neighborhoods of the South Side. In this particular case, government urban redevelopment and renewal policies, as well as a massive public housing program

reshaped, enlarged, and transformed the South Side Black Belt. Decaying neighborhoods were torn down, their inhabitants were shunted off to other quarters, and the land upon which they stood was used for middle-class housing and institutional expansion. High-rise housing projects, created, in large part, to rehouse

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> fugitives from "renewed" areas, literally lined up State Street for miles as a new, vertical ghetto supplemented the old. . . . The ghetto was to be reinforced with taxpayers' dollars and shored up with the power of the state.[27]

The devastating impact of urban renewal on poor urban minorities is beyond question and we continue to pay its price today, for it has entrenched ghettos, solidified segregation, and concentrated poverty. In Chicago, public housing became the cornerstone of private redevelopment and was deliberately funneled to maintain the existing color line. The Chicago Housing Authority acted as the bulwark of racial and class segregation: 99 percent of the 10,300 housing units it built after 1955 (which represented a net addition of only 467 housing units to the city's housing supply because of the simultaneous mass destruction of buildings) were located in all-black, slum areas.[28]

Similar observations could be made about the role of school policies: Sustained public action toward educational integration of ghetto blacks never materialized either at the federal or at the local level. Today, schools are routinely and sometimes purposefully producing dropouts rather than giving inner-city children a chance to escape the destitution and desperation of poverty.[29] Instead of instituting comprehensive schooling and job training measures, the state has responded to the rise in social disorientation and crime that has come along with the increased marginalization of ghetto youth with a *de facto* penal policy, i.e., by stepping up incarceration. Troy Duster reports that there are now more black males in America's jails and penitentiaries than in classrooms on four-year college campuses; in one year alone (1979), 15% of all black youth ages 16 to 19 were arrested at least once; presently, blacks are jailed at a rate eight times that of whites[30] and inner-city blacks are massively overrepresented among inmates.

Other, private, institutions are party to the transformation of the inner city. Banks, for instance, have pumped and continue to pump money out of black neighborhoods by taking in far more deposits than they give out in the form of home mortgages and they have, over the years, financed a disproportionately small amount of home purchasing in the inner city. As the recent "racial transition" of Austin, an area located on the edge of Chicago's West Side, demonstrates, racial and class isolation in the ghetto is also helped by, and expands, as an outgrowth of the routine practices of panic peddling and racial steering of the real estate industry, of the redlining of banks and insurance companies, and of laws that encourage unscrupulous "slum lords" to milk their property for tax benefits while the federal government sits idle in the face of blatant and repeated violations of fair-housing laws.[31] In conclusion, "Chicago's [post-war] ghetto is a dynamic institution, not a dead inheritance from the past," and one that is highly distinctive for the "deep involvement of government."[32]

The Transformed Social-Institutional Structure of the Ghetto

According to the model of urban sociologists Logan and Molotch, "[N]eighborhood futures are determined by the ways in which entrepreneurial pressures from outside intersect with internal material stakes and sentimental attachments."[33] We have seen how, in the last half-century, economic and political pressures have downgraded the commodity status of the inner city in the urban system (especially in the rent-generation process) and undermined its traditional material underpinnings. Here, we want to emphasize how its internal constitution has also been altered. Indeed, the staggering increases in joblessness, infrastructural dilapidation, and educational exclusion in the urban core reveal not merely a quantitative concentration of poverty but a transformation of the social and institutional structure of the inner city which places its inhabitants in a radically more constraining situation than their counterparts of earlier times or the poor of other neighborhoods.

In the first place, the ghetto has lost much of its already limited economic and social resources as a consequence of the outmigration of working- and middle-class black families. As argued by William Julius Wilson, the exodus of stably employed residents has removed an important *social and economic buffer* and made the ghetto poor considerably more vulnerable

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to the prolonged and rising joblessness that has plagued inner-city communities since the early 1970s, thanks to the periodic recessions and uneven growth of the American economy.[34] The dwindling presence of regularly employed households and individuals makes it more difficult for those who remain mired behind to sustain resident institutions. "The sixties gave us people in higher places," reflects a former inhabitant of Chicago's ghetto, "but the rank and file is worse off than they was then. They're on a destruction course. We have more killings, more murder. We have dropouts. Our schools is gone. Our churches is gone. And our business is gone."[35] Institutions that depend on local patronage to flourish have indeed either disapppeared entirely (as in the case of most banks and scores of stores and professional practices) or have sharply reduced their activities and programs, as with churches, block clubs, community groups, and recreational facilities. Means of formal and informal social control have declined along with these organizations; this has contributed in turn to the rising incidence of street crime and to spreading a sense of insecurity that helps further speed up the deterioration of the neighborhood.

A second major impact of the concentration of inner-city poverty is on the school. The lowering of the class composition of the student body and of the volume of "cultural capital" that children bring into the classroom from the outside has substantially diminished objective chances of academic success.[36] The high density of low-achieving students undermines teachers' morale and discipline. The prevalence of joblessness weakens the perception of a meaningful connection between education and work and decreases academic aspirations accordingly, making it exceedingly difficult for the school to compete with other available sources of income and status, including illegal ones. An important mediation of educational and job success (especially in an economy increasingly oriented toward personal services that require frequent face-to-face interaction and extensive social skills of self-management and communication) is language. One of the most worrisome implications of the increasing isolation of the ghetto is that the black English vernacular spoken in inner cities is growing more different from standard English. For sociolinguist William Labov, the fact that "the majority of inner-city blacks are diverging from and not converging with the dominant linguistic pattern" is evidence of their decreasing contacts with the dominant culture; he views it as the linguistic correlate of "the formation of what has been called 'a permanent underclass.' " This *deepening of black-white linguistic opposition* is furthermore becoming less transparent and functions more often than not below the level of social awareness. "When a child enters school and faces the problem of learning to read and write the standard language, unknown and unrecognized differences in the structural base can interfere with the cognitive process of learning to read and deepen the problem of establishing sound social and emotional relations to the school system. . . . When we look at the divergence of black and white vernaculars in the inner city, we see conflict without contact, and therefore conflict without structure."[37]

The single most significant consequence of the increased class segregation of the inner city, however, has to do with its disruption of the networks of occupational contacts that are so crucial in moving individuals into and up job chains. Not only have employment openings been drastically reduced in the ghetto due to the demise of hundreds of local businesses, service establishments and stores; the prevalence of joblessness and the associated changes in the local social structure have also caused a *transformation of both the structure and content of the job networks* that sharply reduces the individual and collective employment chances of most residents. "Members of any group suffering from an unusual degree of unemployment or underemployment have the problem that friends will be disproportionately un- or under-employed, and thus in a poor position to offer job information"[38] or to recommend them for a position. Social isolation means that ghetto residents lack parents, friends, and acquaintances who are stably employed and can therefore function as diversified ties to firms, critical at a time when labor recruiting practices are becoming more and

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more formal, by telling them about a possible opening and assisting them in applying and retaining a job. Furthermore, the job tenures of the privileged minority who are employed are frequently too short for them to accumulate useful job contacts. Unlike earlier generations of inner-city minorities or contemporary poor whites who live in predominantly working-class neighborhoods that are sheltered from acute poverty, ghetto blacks cannot build the "reservoirs of personal contacts" that Granovetter has shown to channel job entry and mediate occupational mobility. Poverty concentration and social isolation thus exert a cumulative negative effect on work opportunities and mobility that goes well beyond the mere shortcomings of aggregate job supply.

Instead, networks based on cooperation in illegal activities such as drug dealing, petty theft, or fencing stolen goods provide a readily available alternative for many teenagers from these communities to obtain the income they need. As a result, numerous inner-city adolescents routinely become involved with gangs and crime rather than work at an early age.[39] All of these objective transformations are in turn further reinforced by changes in the subjective experiences and aspirations of ghetto residents. Living in a neighborhood plagued by material decay and continued exclusion from the economy makes it arduous to maintain a commitment to the labor force and a belief in the rosy promises of "mainstream" society. Long and repeated spells of forced unemployment, a succession of low-paying jobs, and the persistent economic insecurity that come with them are experiences that go a long way toward explaining the reluctance of many inner-city blacks to keep making efforts at finding stable employment. There is no way to quantify the *demoralization effect* of persistent economic and sociocultural exclusion but everything indicates that it is one of the heaviest human costs of the marginalization of the ghetto.[40]

Through a rough, practical "spontaneous statistic," ghetto residents come progressively to evaluate their objective chances of escaping poverty and to adjust their social and economic conduct to the closed opportunity structure they face. Thus a circular process sets in that feeds back onto itself, whereby subjective expectations and hopes act to reinforce the objective mechanisms that limit their already meager chances of mobility. Far from being born of the alleged disincentives of (at any rate dwindling) welfare handouts, a self-reproducing "culture of poverty" or the moral defects of poor individuals mystified by the spell of an all-powerful (and mythical) "welfare mentality," the disposition towards the future and towards the economy of inner-city residents, and the discouragement and hopelessness that their conduct often manifests, are nothing other than a realistic expression of their objective future.[41]

Toward a New Policy Debate

Public discussion of poverty and welfare has been severely hampered by the recent barrage of conservative rhetoric and by the rapid erosion of the influence of the poor and working class upon government, attendant upon the reorganization of the linkages between corporations, the ruling class and political parties.[42] The current debate on the so-called "black underclass" has been paradigmatic of this myopia. Recently, liberals and conservatives have reached an agreement that the problem of the ghetto should be tackled primarily by means of welfare reform, that public assistance should be based on "reciprocal responsibilities" between society (represented by the state) and public aid recipients, and that able-bodied adult recipients should be coerced to work or to prepare themselves for employment if necessary. This agreement is predicated on two patently false assumptions: First, that welfare can provide a way out of the predicament of the ghetto; second, that it is not the economic and political structure of society that has produced the latter but, somehow, deficiencies in the moral or cultural makeup of individual poor persons. Both of these premises do not withstand for one second the test of careful empirical investigation, historical analysis and cross-national comparison.

Instead of addressing the structural factors that are producing inner-city dislocations, including the tenacious and rising economic insecurity of meager pay and joblessness, policy advocates have fastened on the personal

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characteristics of ghetto residents.[43] As a result, policy initiatives have mistakenly focused on devising renewed incentives or means of administrative coercion to reform the assumed habits of the apathetic, deviant, and destructive individuals that supposedly make up the "underclass." Such *disciplining,* in Foucault's sense of the term, will do little to alleviate the plight of inner-city minorities, for "it is not deviance—culture of poverty—that is keeping most poor blacks down, but the persistence of unemployment and the spread of low-wage, unsteady employment."[44]

Insofar as the range of policy solutions envisaged is largely predetermined by how one defines the problem, the first item on the political agenda is to recognize that the false consensus that currently obtains between conservatives and liberals is hiding the real issues. It rests on a *depoliticization and a dehistoricization* of the problem that denies its collective nature and origins. Since ghetto poverty is the product of economic and political forces and struggles, not the result of the aggregation of free individual choices or moral failures, remedies to it must likewise be economic and political.

Any realistic attempt at progressive reform here needs to take into account the peculiar legacy of American state formation and social policy experience. Historical analysis demonstrates conclusively that the pattern of social and economic intervention launched during the New Deal, anchored by the sharp bifurcation between "social security" (aimed mainly at the stable working class and middle class and blessed with strong administrative capacities and a broad base of public support) and the disjointed patchwork of programs known under the rubric of "welfare" (serving mainly minorities and the poor, and thus devoid of strong popular and institutional backing), continues to stamp state programs and thinking in dealing with poverty and that, as long as this bifurcation persists, there is little hope for meaningful change. Consequently, *programs aimed at improving the lives of society's most disadvantaged members must be inclusive* in order to diminish, not aggravate, the political isolation of the poor, and particularly the black poor, from the working and middle classes in the American policy-making process. "The persistence of poverty, particularly among black Americans, can be addressed only by new universal policies—and correspondingly broad political coalitions—that transcend the limits of the New Deal system."[45] Thus the peculiar paradox of the politics of American social provision: It is necessary to provide for the majority in order to help the most disadvantaged minority.

What would such a comprehensive, social-democratic agenda include? Its centerpiece would have to be "a qualitatively defined full employment,"[46] including provision of public employment when necessary, and, short of this, a national guaranteed minimum income of the kind instituted by numerous Western European countries to weather the transition to the new world and domestic economic order. For this, a full employment federal tax and expenditure strategy must be combined with greater regulation of labor markets (including stricter legislation on plant closings and an increase in the minimum wage, which has yet to be raised since 1981 after being increased four times between 1978 and 1981), flexible industrial reconversion, relocation, and retraining programs, and the amelioration of the social wage by means of universal family allowances. There is no reason, other than political ones, for goods and services necessary to satisfy basic human and social needs not to be available to all. Child and health care must be universally provided, along with low-cost housing, and expanded educational chances. Today, less than one percent of the federal budget is expended on either training and job programs or education.

The gravity of the situation of the ghetto calls for bold experimentation, of the mind and in reality, not for fine tuning and modest expansion of existing interventions. Rather than revive once more the perennial conservative discourse of moral obligations and individual initiative, we must muster the imagination and political will to try out new ideas and to pass innovative legislation by learning, not turning away, from the successes of other capitalist democracies.[47] Most important, we must no longer be fainthearted in our defense of demo-

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cratic social policies by the state and we must never again let the free-market dogmas and delusions of conservatives set the tone and terms of the debate. For while the programs that are urgently needed to expand social and economic opportunity and turn the tide of inequality—in the inner city and beyond—will no doubt be costly to the public coffers, they do not begin to compare to the economic, social, and human costs of the current do-nothing policy. □

Notes

[1] Quoted in Arne Duncan, "Profiles in Poverty: An Ethnographic Report on Inner-City Black Youth" (paper presented at the Urban Poverty Workshop, The University of Chicago, October 1987), p. 14.

[2] See Fred Harris and Roger W. Wilkins, eds., *Quiet Riots: Race and Poverty in the United States* (New York: Pantheon, 1988) for a synopsis. Robert Blauner's remarkable collection of interviews with blacks over a twenty-year period, *Black Lives, White Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), brings out time and again the notion that "this is a worse kind of ghetto."

[3] See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), and Martin Kilson, "Social Classes and Intergenerational Poverty," *The Public Interest* 64 (Summer 1981), pp. 58–78.

[4] June Axinn and Mark J. Stern, *Dependency and Poverty: Old Problems in a New World* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1988).

[5] Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *The New Class War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

[6] These data are based on a survey of a multistage random sample of black residents of Chicago's poverty areas, ages 18 to 45 conducted by the Urban Poverty and Family Structure Project at the University of Chicago (under the direction of William Julius Wilson). The preliminary results summarized in this table concern only the 364 black respondents who lived in tracts with more than 40 percent poor persons in them, 82 percent of which were located on Chicago's South and West Sides. See Loïc J.D. Wacquant and William Julius Wilson, "The Cost of Racial and Class Exclusion in the Inner City," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501, January 1989, pp. 8–25, for further precisions on this survey and a more detailed sociography of Chicago's ghetto that constrasts it with other working- and lower-middle class black neighborhoods. On the persistence of near-total racial segregation in Chicago, see for instance Joe T. Darden, "Socioeconomic Status and Racial Residential Segregation: Blacks and Hispanics in Chicago," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 1(2), 1987, pp. 1–13.

[7] Cited in Bob Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives*, p. 174.

[8] Interview by Loïc J.D. Wacquant for the Urban Poverty and Family Structure Project, summer 1987. Such descriptions could be repeated over and over in inner cities throughout the country. Thus in the San Franciso Bay Area, a black community worker reports: "See those guys standing over there in the street right now? Those are young men—they don't have any jobs. Young people should be able to get jobs, young people need to be given an opportunity not to become animals. With all the CETA programs and everything, we have not raised the level of ninety percent of the young blacks out there. Blacks now are beginning to go into banks and rob. And that's not all drug money—that's desperation for food money. And the sad part about it is that they are breaking into blacks' homes. We had less of that kind of thing than we have now" (quoted in Blauner, *op. cit.*, p. 192).

[9] Designs for Change, *The Bottom Line: Chicago's Failing Schools and How to Save Them*, Chicago, Chicago School Watch, Research Report #1, 1985.

[10] Quoted in Robert Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives*, p. 185. See also Douglas G. Glasgow, *The Black Underclass: Poverty, Unemployment, and Entrapment of Ghetto Youth* (New York: Vintage, 1981), and the vivid personal testimonies collected in Leslie Dunbar, *The Common Interest* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), chapter 3, "A Just Entitlement: That There Be Work."

[11] See Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); and Fred Block, *Revising State Theory: Essays on Politics and Postindustrialism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), for three insightful discussions of these theses.

[12] This is in no way unique to Chicago but characterizes all major Rustbelt megalopolises with large black ghettos, as was shown elsewhere (Loïc J.D. Wacquant and William Julius Wilson, "Poverty, Joblessness and the Social Transformation of the Inner City," in Phoebe H. Cottingham and David Ellwood, eds., *Welfare Policy for the 1990s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 70-102). For example, from 1958 to 1982, the number of production workers in New York City dropped from 670,000 to 311,000 (−54 percent); in Philadelphia from 208,000 to 81,000 (−61 percent); in Detroit from 145,000 to a mere 59,000 (−59 percent).

[13] The key deficiency of the literature on the so-called "mismatch hypothesis" is that it mistakes the *description* of the outcomes of political-economic processes and of ongoing class-racial struggles over their social allocation for their *explanation*, in effect "naturalizing" them. Cf. John Kasarda, "Urban Change and Minority Opportunities" (in Paul Peterson, ed., *The New Urban Reality*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985, pp. 33–67), for a particularly lucid and sophisticated restatement of this ecological model, and David T. Ellwood,

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"The Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis: Are there Teenage Jobs Missing in the Ghetto?" (in Richard B. Freeman and Harry J. Holzer, eds., *The Black Youth Employment Crisis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 147–197) for a typical approach by an economist which "explores the so-called mismatch hypothesis as an *explanation* for the poor labor market experiences of young blacks" (p. 147, my emphasis).

[14] Barry Bluestone, "Deindustrialization and Unemployment in America," *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 17 (2), Fall 1988, pp. 29–44, quote p. 38. This section also draws upon Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Great U-Turn* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), as well as on a lecture by Bennett Harrison, "How the Lower Half Lives," delivered at the Urban Poverty Workshop, the University of Chicago, March 1988.

[15] Defined as the " 'rational' tyranny of capital mobility over the collective worker." For an analysis of this new "factory regime" in advanced capitalism, see Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1985), chapter 3. One could list here tens of examples of cities or states blackmailed by large employers into providing more collective investment for private profit. The panic created among city and state politicians and officials by Sears's threat to move out of Chicago is emblematic of this strategy. Shortly after Sears announced it was considering relocating its 6,600 jobs elsewhere, possibly to Raleigh, Charlotte or Dallas, Mayor Daley and Republican Governor Thompson joined hands in packaging an assistance plan (some might call it a hand-out) worth an estimated $300 million, including 80 acres of prime property near O'Hare Airport virtually for nothing, free site and infrastructural improvements, new highway access, a property tax abatement, job training subsidies and enterprise zone incentives (*Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1989, Business section, pp. 1-2). An even more striking instance is that of Detroit's Poletown as recounted by Barry Bluestone in his article "Deindustrialization and Unemployment in America."

[16] See Alejandro Portes and John Walton, *Labor, Class, and the International System* (New York, Wiley, 1981), and Sassia Sassen-Koob, "Recomposition and Peripheralization at the Core," *Contemporary Marxism*, 5, 1982, pp. 88–100.

[17] Daniel T. Lichter, "Racial Differences in Underemployment in American Cities," *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(4), January 1988, pp. 771–792, quote p. 789.

[18] Thomas D. Boston provides evidence of this in his *Race, Class, and Conservatism* (Boston: Unwin and Hyman, 1988). Also Norman Fainstein, "The Underclass/Mismatch Hypothesis as an Explanation of Black Economic Deprivation," *Politics and Society*, 15(4), 1986–87, pp. 403–452.

[19] David Bensman and Roberta Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 102–103.

[20] Not surprisingly, many of those who are wary of inner-city black males are more favorably disposed toward black females, whom they see as more reliable and willing to take on low-paying jobs because of the weight of their family responsibilities. The apparently neutral and well-founded requirement of work experience is in fact a circular argument that sets up a catch-22 situation for inner-city youth: they cannot find work because they do not have sufficient job experience, which they do not get because employers do not hire them.

[21] The ferocity of the employer drive to eliminate and prevent unions is documented by Rick Fantasia in his remarkable *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), chapter 2. Michael Golfield, *The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1987) has shown that de-unionization is the result, not of sectoral or occupational changes driven by technology, but of concerted anti-union attacks of the part of corporations.

[22] According to Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). It is possible that the recent decline of black college attendance, which has puzzled many observers, constitutes partly a response to this decreased commitment of the state to provide paths of occupational ascent for blacks.

[23] Ted Robert Gurr and Desmond S. King argue in *The State and the City* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1987) that, even in the United States, national and local states play significant material and regulatory roles that have as great an impact on cities as private economic activities.

[24] This paragraph builds on John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), passim and especially p. 153 and pp. 196–199.

[25] Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 233.

[26] John Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 121.

[27] Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 10.

[28] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, p. 243. Roger Friedland (*Power and Crisis in the City*, London, Macmillan, 1982, and "The Politics of Profit and the Geography of Growth," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 19, 1983, pp. 41–54) has found that urban renewal destroyed far more housing than it created at a time of great shortage of low-income housing, especially among ghetto blacks.

[29] On the failure of federal school policies, see Gary Orfield, "Race and the Liberal Agenda: The Loss of the Integrationist Dream, 1965–1974," in Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *The Politics of Social Provision in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); on the institutional debilitation of ghetto schools and how they can deliberately push students out, see the remarkable research of Michelle Fine, including "Why Urban Adolescents Drop Into and Out of High School," *Teachers College Record*, 7, 1986; "Silencing in Public Schools," *Language Arts*, 64(2),

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February 1987, pp. 157–174, and "Bein' Wrapped Too Tight: When Low-Income Women Drop Out of High School," in Lois Weis, ed., *Dropouts in Schools: Issues, Dilemmas, Solutions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

[30] Troy Duster, "Social Implications of the 'New' Black Urban Underclass," *The Black Scholar*, 19(3), May-June 1988, pp. 2-9. There is more than a touch of irony in the fact that the term "underclass," which has recently been consecrated as the new label to designate an allegedly new, if ill-defined, "group" of inner-city poor, is also used in criminology to refer to the regular jail population —unbeknownst to most specialists of the "underclass." See, e.g., John Irwin, *The Jail: Managing The Underclass in American Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For an effective critique of the uses of this term, which owes its success more to its ideological malleability than to its analytical usefulness, read William Kornblum, "Lumping the Poor: What Is the Underclass?," *Dissent,* Summer 1984, pp. 275–302.

[31] Cf. Tom Brune and Eduardo Camacho, *A Special Report: Race and Poverty in Chicago* (Chicago: The Chicago Reporter and the Center for Community Research and Assistance, 1983), pp. 16–17. See my discussion of the fate of the adjacent neighborhood of North Lawndale in "Poverty, Joblessness, and the Social Transformation of the Inner City." For comparable evidence on another city, see Harriett Taggart and Kevin Smith, "Redlining: An Assessment of the Evidence in Metropolitan Boston," *Urban Affairs Quarterly,* 17(1), 1981, pp. 91-107.

[32] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, p. 254.

[33] Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*, p. 123.

[34] William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, especially pp. 46–62.

[35] Cited in Bob Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives,* p. 175.

[36] Pierre Bourdieu ("Les trois états du capital culturel," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 30, 1979, pp. 3–6; also Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 1977) discusses the three forms of cultural capital —embodied, objectified, and institutionalized— involved in the transmission of cultural inequality.

[37] William Labov, "Language Structure and Social Structure," in Siegwart Lindenberg, James S. Coleman, and Stephan Nowak, eds., *Approaches to Social Theory* (New York: Russell Sage, 1986), pp. 265–284, quotes pp. 277–78 and pp. 281–282 respectively.

[38] Mark Granovetter, *Getting A Job: A Study in Contacts and Careers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 136.

[39] John Agedorn (*People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, Chicago: Lakeview Press, 1988) has turned up a fairly direct link between deindustrialization, social isolation, and gang activities in Millwaukee's inner city. It should be stressed that gangs and crime are not, public perceptions to the contrary, coterminous with one another.

[40] It is perhaps particularly acute (or more visible) among black men, for whom masculinity remains defined essentially in terms of steady employment and the ability to provide for their family. For moving accounts of how joblessness erodes the ability to be a father, a husband, and to maintain a sense of self-worth as "a man" in the black community, see the interviews in Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives*. Mercer Sullivan ("Absent Fathers in the Inner City," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501, January 1989, pp. 48–58) also discusses the impact of male joblessness upon family life.

[41] See Lawrence Mead, *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), for a statement of the conservative myth of the "welfare mentality," and Jay McLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987) on the complex (and sometimes counterintuitive) dialectic of objective chances and subjective aspirations among black and white youth in a Northeastern urban housing project.

[42] This aspect of the transformation of American politics is discussed by Thomas Byrne Edsall in *The New Politics of Inequality* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

[43] David Ward has unearthed the "long ancestry" of such views, "going back to the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the first wave of mass immigration from Europe exacerbated anxieties about the social order," in his remarkable book, *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City, 1840–1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). The historical roots of this vision, which turns a *societal* problem into a question of *individual* attributes and incentives, is explored provocatively by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward in "Sources of the Contemporary Relief Debate," in Fred Block et al., *The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State* (New York: Pantheon, 1988). See also Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

[44] Axinn and Stern, *Dependency and Poverty*, p. 118.

[45] Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol, "The Future of Social Policy in the United States: Political Constraints and Possibilities," in their edited volume, *The Politics of Social Provision in the United States, op. cit.*

[46] Michael Harrington, "The First Steps and a Few Beyond," *Dissent*, Winter 1988, pp. 44–56, quote p. 50.

[47] Paul Osterman's *Employment Futures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) offers a stimulating reflection on job training policy alternatives by contrasting the German and Swedish models of comprehensive vocational education and flexible labor markets to the haphazard and disjointed U.S. system. Sheila B. Kamerman and Alfred J. Kahn ("What Europe Does for Single-Parent Families," *Transatlantic Perspectives*, 19, Spring 1989, pp. 9–11) do the same on family policies and their impact on poverty in single-parent households.

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Clement Cottingham

GENDER SHIFT IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

Looking at a Social Trend

The aftereffects of the mass movements of the late 1960s, of sustained racial unrest and the riots of 1967 and 1968 on black urban society are as yet not fully understood. Yet I believe they lie at the root of certain patterns in the experience of the black urban lower class. Urban unrest in the 1960s involved an assault not only on white racial-caste authority but also on normal civil authority; New Jersey's governor at the time referred to Newark as a "city in open rebellion." This urban upheaval also involved relationships within black society disrupting its authority structure. Many of the male black rioters were extremely hostile toward both middle-class blacks and middle-class whites, causing both groups to leave the inner city.

This class-skewed dispersion of blacks in big cities since the late 1960s underscores the relationship between urban political mobilization, riots, and the deterioration of class authority. As more and more black males participate in illicit drug activities, it has become clear that they exhibit little fear of the police or governmental authority at any level, let alone of dominant social norms, be they ethnic patterns among blacks or general American ones. Though the issue will not be probed here, the flight of the black middle and upper strata from the central cities may have contributed indirectly to the crisis of the black lower class.

The loosening of black urban social structures is the focus of this article. As blacks became urbanized after the 1950s, their family structures began to evolve rapidly not only toward female-headed households but toward a general female assertiveness[1] that manifested itself in schools, in educational achievement, in job-market participation, and eventually in community structures.

This gender shift involves two dimensions: accelerated black female educational mobility and the marginalization of lower-class black males. There is, it must be noted, an important ideological element behind the perception of this evolving gender shift. Some observers have suggested that "scholars and policy-makers alike have taken the manifestations of black women's oppression and twisted them into the argument that a powerful black matriarchy exists."[2] But this is *not* how I view it. Rather, my views are shaped by the tough innovations and admirable resilience of black females despite systemic and subcultural oppression and despite the enormous upheaval in the black urban lower class from the 1960s onward.

As I see it, female assertiveness now operates broadly within many weak black working- and lower-class families in the cities. This female assertiveness occurs in relation to, and against, a socialization crisis among a growing sector of lower-class black males. But in the long run, female assertiveness within the lower and working classes could serve to restore the ability of males to regain social strength. Over time, higher levels of educational attainment will alter the cultural context of black family life and influence the mother's

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socialization role within the family. In due course, cultural changes in the family unit may effectively modify mother-son patterns of communication and social interaction, particularly the mothers' disposition overprotectively to "love their sons and raise their daughters."

Previous Tendencies

Drawing on Southern black folk culture, James Baldwin, in his last published work, alluded to black lower-class social patterns which, when set against the urban upheaval among the black poor from the 1960s onward, seem to encourage this gender shift. He characterizes these lower-class social patterns as "a disease peculiar to the Black community called 'sorriness.' It is," Baldwin observes, "a disease that attacks Black males. It is transmitted by Mama, whose instinct is to protect the Black male from the devastation that threatens him from the moment he declares himself a man."

Apart from its protectiveness toward male children, Baldwin notes another dimension of "sorriness." "Mama," he writes, "lays this burden on Sister from whom she expects (or indicates she expects) far more than she expects from Brother; but one of the results of this all too comprehensible dynamic is that Brother may never grow up—in which case the community has become an accomplice to the Republic."[3] Perceptively, Baldwin concludes that the differences in the socialization of boys and girls eventually erode the father's commitment to family life.

This mother/son relationship may contribute to intense conflict between boyfriends/girlfriends.[4] Commenting, for example, on the long-term effects of teenage pregnancy, Jacqueline Jones observes that "a young woman's satisfaction upon entering womanhood [having children] eventually gives way to feelings of bitterness toward the father who can afford so little reliable child support." Consequently, she remarks, "the institution of single parenthood carries with it the possibility of long-lasting estrangement between black women and men."[5]

Since many black children are today born out of wedlock, tensions over reliable child support are built into gender relations among many blacks. In some contexts, black males are perceived as having failed to function either as viable protectors or providers. Reacting to the increase in New York City's female black prison population, one warden commented on the infrequent visits from black men: "You rarely see the boyfriends coming out there. With men, the women take care of them. But the men don't take care of the women. They abandon them. It's pitiful."[6] In all too many relationships the black male withdraws from commitments, providing little financial or emotional support.

On the other hand, according to Leon Dash, who has extensively observed the urban poor for the *Washington Post,* young black females frequently put "enormous pressure on young men . . . regardless of whether the young women were mothers, to be providers. A male who could not bring money into a relationship was 'trifflin,' lazy, and no good. Many of the young men were unemployed and, therefore, by the young women's measure, considered trifling."[7] Over the long run, these developments facilitate the marginalization of many lower-class black males within the American society as a whole and also within the black subculture.

New Jersey Past

Scattered evidence with regard to several New Jersey cities suggests that black females have exercised increasingly important roles in the urban communities. These roles were closely connected to the black females' relatively high levels of education. Data from the 1930s and 1940s demonstrate that black girls often graduated from New Jersey high schools in larger proportions than black males. Working mainly as domestic servants and laundry employees, black females also entered more stable occupations. Accordingly, it was not unusual to find slightly more females than males in the labor force. For example, in Montclair in 1930, while 49 percent of black males over ten were in the labor force, some 51 percent of black females in the same age group were in the labor force.[8] This same pattern obtained in Newark in the 1930s. Black women

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traveled to white suburbs to work as domestic servants, thereby supplementing black family income.

An important consequence was that, by the late 1930s, black women were generally more active in social organizations than men. One study observed, "There are quite a number of good women's clubs, but no men's clubs worth mentioning. It is apparent from this that the men in the Third Ward [Newark's Central Ward now] are not society minded in the sense that men of similar districts in other cities are."[9]

Yet despite the increasing participation in the labor force of black women in cities like Newark and Montclair in the 1930s and 1940s, there was a ceiling on their capacity to translate this into female assertiveness. Mostly, it was blue-collar and middle-class black males that headed major community and professional organizations. A female assertiveness associated with a general gender shift had to await the upheaval in urban black communities that began in the 1960s.

New Jersey Present: Leadership Shifts

Black gender roles have changed steadily since the late 1960s. To illustrate the impact of urban mass movements and political mobilization on black gender relations, I examined school leadership patterns and graduation rates in two small, predominantly black urban New Jersey school systems. High schools appeared to be a milieu within which black female assertiveness evolved—something I view as an outgrowth of the loosening of social structures among urban blacks during the 1960s and 1970s. This evidence is, of course, based on a modest sample, but it is, I believe, suggestive.

Several high schools in Camden and East Orange, New Jersey experienced in 1968 a series of racial upheavals. The incidents involved fist fights between black and white students as well as challenges to the authority of teachers. New forms of consciousness took hold among black high school students, leading to new social norms and changes in the schools' racial compositions. Teachers sometimes retreated in the face of racial violence and out of fear of black student militancy. In such situations, as one recent study notes, "No one seemed to know what rules applied; the old world had fallen apart."[10]

During the early 1960s the Camden and East Orange high schools were predominantly white. White students held nearly all student government offices, with white males dominant. In one Camden school—we'll call it East High—this pattern of male dominance held briefly after 1968 when the student body became predominantly black. But this transfer of white male dominance to black males was decidedly temporary.

In 1969 a virtual revolution occurred in the gender composition of the student council at East High. It became not only all-black but all-female. The importance of gender is heightened when we recognize that prior to 1968, when white students predominated, white females held virtually none of the major student council posts. But this first sign of black female assertiveness at East High was initially fleeting, for within a year the traditional pattern of student leadership was reinstated. Black males again claimed the primary offices and held them through 1973. Even so, by 1975 a pattern of conspicuous female leadership was consolidated; the main offices went to black females throughout the rest of the 1970s. And, although one post occasionally went to a black male during the 1980s, the decade has witnessed a steady consolidation of its gender shift.

A similar pattern occurred in two high schools in East Orange—we'll call them North and South High. In the predominantly black North High evidence of a gender shift appears in 1968, just one year after the 1967 riots in adjacent Newark. Except for the black male president of the senior class, by 1968 all of North High class presidencies were held by black females. Between 1960 and 1966 black males in North High dominated the student council presidency, but between 1968 and 1973 only one black male was elected to this position. Again, though black males regained a couple of student council presidencies after 1973, the clear and unambiguous trend for the rest of the 1970s and beyond was toward black female leadership.

This overall prominence of black females in

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student offices also prevailed at East Orange's South High School. Black females were elected most frequently (68 percent) to high student government posts, while black males held only 24 percent of such posts. Though many factors may explain this gender shift—such as the rise of feminism—there is little doubt that black females have begun to constitute the key leadership group.

A look at the composition of graduating classes also reveals a gender shift among black students in New Jersey. In 1960 East Orange's South High was 70 percent white. But between 1960 and 1965 the white student population fell to 42 percent and within two years to 23 percent. Graduation rates for white males and females during these years were approximately similar.

Among black students, however, females were already graduating at higher rates than black males during the early 1960s. In the middle 1960s the gender gap in favor of black females rose as high as 12 percent and then declined. In general since 1969 the gender gap has widened sharply between black females and males. Through the 1970s and 1980s black females went from a 17 percent graduation gap in 1969 to a 21 percent gap in 1973 to a 30 percent gap in 1980 to a 26 percent gap in 1985. Over this two-decade period black females constituted a high proportion of the top ten honors graduates.

Some Implications

The black gender shift since the late 1960s has been pro-women without being politically feminist. One reason is that black feminism evolves less in highly visible ideological terms than in more subdued de facto ones, such as the growing rate of black female participation in the labor force and in the rates in which women hold high-school offices and graduate.

In recent years, black feminism, freed from certain macho cultural constraints among blacks, is more visible in the evolving gender shift. This is especially so in regard to the socialization of male children among lower-class and some working-class black families. The Harvard psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint recently remarked

> One problem . . . is that many single black mothers are angry with black men, sometimes with justification. When they talk among themselves, these women commonly disparage men. Their conversations symbolize the negative atmosphere in which many black boys are being raised.

Combine this with the absence of male providers in many lower-class and some working-class black households, and there follows a disturbing scenario for the future of black male children.

> In the absence of positive adult models, many black boys, as young as 7 or 8, turn to their peers to explore the essence of being male. These peer groups often perpetuate behaviors that impede the chances of black males for success in education and employment. (*New York Times*, April 19, 1989.)

In the face of a steadily evolving gender shift toward black females, black males are experiencing a major reversal in status. Since the 1970s black males constitute a smaller percentage of the urban black populations with secondary and higher education. Moreover, because of widespread black male participation in criminal activity, black males are increasingly perceived as less stable and less responsible than black females. Nor is the black middle class unaffected by the gender shift, for declining black male college enrollments along with a disproportionate increase in black female college enrollment will move the gender shift "upwards." Inevitably, differences in higher educational levels translate into differing access to "mobility regimes."[11]

Thoughts on the Future

Notwithstanding the fact that black females have long graduated in larger numbers than black males, the graduation rates of black males have declined in an accelerated fashion during the past two decades. This decline is related to changes in the composition of black families and in the urban economy. These trends apparently took hold in the late sixties, particularly as a result of political mobilization associated with urban racial riots. While black

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males participated in the riots, black females apparently responded to the riots in a special way. As white students exited hastily from urban secondary schools, black females succeeded to high office.

Though the implications of these gender shifts are not yet well understood, this analysis implies that status, and perhaps power, in black urban society is steadily shifting toward females. Differences in educational attainment across gender translate into access to different "mobility regimes." With higher literacy rates, black females are more likely to enter high-skill-based, professions. In contrast, black males are more likely to enter unstable remedial "mobility regimes" specifically designed to enhance their educational, employment, and training skills. Failing to penetrate even these "regimes," many young black males have in various ways become marginalized, unable or unwilling to enter legitimate job markets. Not surprisingly, they are, increasingly, unable to function as good providers, and consequently, the black gender gap widens and is likely to widen further in the next decade.

Given the lagging educational attainment of black males, the same processes that erode racial inequalities *also* erode gender inequalities in black communities. Compared to males, black females move smoothly through the secondary and higher educational systems. Their literacy rates now exceed those of black males. This density of black female educational attainment constitutes a strategic opening to a broad range of opportunities. As Reynolds Farley and Walter Allen suggest with respect to ascendant black female earnings, under these conditions the financial incentives for black females to marry diminish rapidly.[12]

In spite of the fact that many black males currently participate in the economic mainstream, they have clearly suffered a decline in their educational status. While this analysis has only hinted at the complex, multiple causes affecting black gender relations, it should provide an insight into the ever-increasing feminization of black urban society. Though still exploratory and highly tentative, the analysis of black gender relations nevertheless may yield important policy implications as to how we organize surrogate family support systems or parenting clinics, and how we seek to motivate young black males in urban schools and other training programs. □

Notes

[1] See Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970) and Emmanuel Todd, *The Causes of Progress: Culture, Authority, and Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[2] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (New York: Vintage, 1986), p. 7.

[3] James Baldwin, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1985), p. 19

[4] See Elijah Anderson, "Sex Among Poor Black Teenagers: Game of Conquests and Dreams," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 14, 1989).

[5] Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, p. 326.

[6] Celestine Bohlen, "Number of Mothers in Jail Surges with Drug Arrests," *The New York Times* (April 17, 1989).

[7] Leon Dash, *When Children Want Children* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1989) p. 263.

[8] Rhea Brown, *Report on the Negro in Montclair—Ethnic Survey* (New Jersey Archives, 1940).

[9] E. Johnson, *Organizational Life in the Newark Third Ward—Ethnic Survey* (New Jersey Archives, 1940).

[10] Gerald Grant, *The World We Created At Hamilton High* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) p. 43.

[11] On the notion of "mobility regimes," see Marc Maurice et al., *The Social Foundation of Industrial Power* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986).

[12] Reynolds Farley and Walter R. Allen, *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987), p. 351.

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Martin Kilson

PROBLEMS OF BLACK POLITICS

Some Progress, Many Difficulties

A complex class context underlies the changes in black American politics of the last twenty years. Today's black stratification comprises sharply different classes—a coping stratum made up of blue- and white-collar workers, professionals and managers, business people and wealthy entertainers, and a noncoping stratum made up of weak working-class families, hardcore poor families, and an underclass. This represents a disaggregation of the rather simple black stratification of the 1900–1950s era, when most black families were weak working-class and hardcore poor. It has also spawned in turn a new differentiation of black political attitudes.

New Diversification

Over the twenty years since the urban riots, something like the *Kerner Report*'s prediction of a split in American life between blacks and whites has evolved within black American society as well. Although the number of employed blacks increased by 1.3 million (17.3 percent) between 1972 and 1980, the largest gain was in white-collar jobs (nearly 1.2 million or 55 percent) and the sharpest increases were in professional/technical (354,000 or 55.4 percent) and managerial/administrative jobs (168,000 or 69.1 percent). The stable working-class or blue-collar ranks, relatively well-paid, also expanded in 1972–1980, by 217,000 or 32.3 percent. Thus, in overall occupational terms, some 55.3 percent of employed blacks were white-collar workers by 1980 and some 6.8 percent were stable blue-collar workers, placing some two-thirds (62 percent) of employed blacks in a job market that can be termed coping strata.[1]

A similar coping stratum expansion of the black social structure occurs along income lines. By 1986 some 46 percent of black households were earning middle-level incomes of $20,000-plus and another 25 percent a basic working-class income between $10,000 and $20,000, thereby putting some two-thirds of black households in the coping stratum income rank. Today some two-thirds of black households reside socially within the coping stratum; that is, they are (1) working-class (working poor or stable blue collar); (2) middle-class (white-collar workers); and (3) upper-stratum or upper-class (professionals, managers, capitalists, wealthy entertainers, and so on). When compared with 1950 when barely 5 percent of black households fell within the middle-class and upper-stratum category, the social-political metamorphosis since the late 1960s or early 1970s constitutes a major transformation of black America. (See Table I)

Yet this advance of some two-thirds of black households (70 percent, in fact) to the coping-stratum ranks, where some 90 percent of white households reside today, has been counterbalanced by an expansion of poor black households. While about 23 percent of blacks were in poverty by the late 1960s, this proportion reached 30 percent by the late 1980s; and in the worst rustbelt cities like Newark, Gary, East St. Louis, and Chester (Pennsylvania), the proportion hovers between 35 and 40 percent.

Typically, it is this poverty that activists and leftists (black or white) focus on. And this is as it should be, given the structural depth of

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TABLE 1

FAMILY INCOME: 1986

	Black Families	White Families
Over $50,000	8.8%	22.0%
$35,000–$50,000	12.4%	20.6%
$20,000–$35,000	24.3%	28.5%
$10,000–$20,000	24.5%	18.6%
Under $10,000	30.2%	10.2%
Median	$17,604	$30,809

Source: Bureau of the Census.

poverty—black and white—and the indifference among American power elites towards eradicating it. Yet serious progressives should take care not to minimize the enormous achievement of coping stratum black households in the face of begrudging racist American patterns.

There is now a generalized capability among coping stratum blacks to fend for themselves—through trade unions and a plethora of professional associations and black bourgeois networking, aspects of which can be found in the pages of the business magazine *Black Enterprise* and in a catalog of some two hundred black professional associations—most founded since 1970—called *A Guide To Black Organizations* (1984) produced by the Philip Morris Public Affairs Department. Linkages with white bourgeois structures also aid coping stratum blacks, for most black professionals and managers now work in a white milieu. Above all, they function through a black political class (some 6,800 elected officials) whose strategic position—especially the twenty three congressional representatives—has an impact on both public and private power-structures disproportionately in favor of the "have" rather than the "have-not" sector.[2]

In the new black stratification—both between the coping and noncoping strata as well as among segments of each—are the seeds of an evolving diversification of political attitudes and personal evaluations of life chances. A new diversification of black political attitudes first surfaced in a 1980 poll by Data Black, a black-owned polling firm. This poll—conducted by psychologist Kenneth Clark—found a steady differentiation of attitudes among blacks during the late 1970s. For example, some 50 percent of blacks replied "harmful" or "unsure" to welfare programs; 65 percent said they "favor" or were "unsure" regarding subminimum wage for teenagers, and 54 percent said "increase" or "unsure" when asked about defense spending. Other polls such as Gallup for the same period found 41 percent of blacks replying "in favor" to the death penalty; 72 percent said they "favor" tuition tax credits; and 52 percent said "no" to legal abortion if married.

This diversification of attitudes continued into the 1980s. Thus a 1985 poll by American Enterprise Institute—contrasting a black "leadership" sample with a "national" black sample—revealed that while 66 percent of the "national" sample said blacks are "making progress," some 61 percent of the "leadership" sample said blacks were "going backwards." Similarly, 83 percent of the "national" sample said "yes" to prayer in public schools compared to only 40 percent of the "leadership" sample; and 53 percent of the "national" sample favored the death penalty compared to only 33 percent of the "leadership" sample. Finally, some 53 percent of the "national" sample opposed busing for school integration, while 68 percent of the "leadership" favored busing.[3]

A growing diversification of attitudes within black America seriously affects personal evaluations. A 1986 ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, which asked blacks whether they had suffered personal discrimination, found the following: Some 75 percent experienced no discrimination in "getting a quality education"; 73 percent experienced no discrimination in "getting decent housing"; 60 percent experienced no discrimination in "getting a job"; and some 57 percent said they faced no discrimination in "getting equal wages for a job." Thus, while polls show that blacks as a whole still view American life in racial terms—usually at a two-to-one differential compared to whites—the expansion of the black coping sector of blue-collar and middle-class persons, along

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with the class-fissuring of black life, has produced growing differences in how Afro-Americans perceive or evaluate themselves.

For most, or many, blacks today racial discrimination is no longer viewed as an insurmountable obstacle to self-advancement. This enormous shift in perception is captured in a 1985 American Enterprise Institute poll that asked, "If a young person works hard enough, do you think he or she can get ahead in this country, in spite of prejudice and discrimination, or that he or she doesn't have much of a chance no matter how hard he or she works?" Some 82 percent of black respondents said a young black person can advance despite racism, compared to 18 percent who responded negatively.

This collapse of black Americans' earlier homogeneity in political attitudes and personal evaluations will surely spawn new directions in black politics. More class-linked black voting can be expected, as well as more bipartisan political behavior. But, in general, this is not an automatic "conversion" for black Americans, any more than it has been for white ethnic groups.

Above all, it has been the rise of the New Right in American politics under Ronald Reagan's leadership that has slowed the spread of new directions in black politics, such as more bipartisanship. In Reagan's first term he led an assault on basic civil rights, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Reagan also slashed basic programs of interest to blacks, such as food stamps (26 percent black household recipients, 19 percent Hispanic, 6.5 percent white); free or reduced-price lunches (50 percent black household recipients, 44.5 percent Hispanic, 16 percent white); subsidized or public housing (24 percent black household recipients, 11 percent Hispanic, 8 percent white); and Medicaid (26 percent black recipients, 20 percent Hispanic, 7.5 percent white). This right-wing assault on programs serving basic black needs produced few black votes for Reagan.

Still, there were signs of new political directions evolving even in the darkest days of Reaganism. This was apparent during the 1984 election, especially at the state level, where a liberal or moderate Republican could package the Reagan-Bush ticket more suitably for black voters. Something like this took place in New Jersey in 1984, where the Reagan-Bush ticket mustered 20 percent of the black votes, twice the national rate. This was a direct extension to the national party of black support for the state Republican party, whose candidate for governor in 1985—incumbent Thomas Kean—gained 56 percent of black votes. The organization of New Jersey's black votes for Kean was spearheaded by a brilliant black Republican politician, Leonard S. Coleman, Commissioner for Energy in Governor Kean's first administration and Commissioner of Community Affairs in his second administration.

The rationale underlying an evolving new direction in politics among black Americans is simple enough, namely, black concerns are enhanced as black inputs into American politics are spread across interest groups in the system as a whole. In short, the diversification of blacks' attitudes, voting patterns, candidacy, policy concerns, and so on, "Americanizes" the black political profile (just as a similar diversification "Americanized" the Jewish-American profile in the 1970s). This, in turn, enables black and white Americans to link their political fortunes.

The Transethnic Imperative

In the years ahead what I call a transethnic imperative will increasingly inform black American life in general and its politics in particular. The goal of such an imperative would be to intertwine the leadership of black and white sociopolitical institutions. For politics remains the most available sphere for transethnic penetration by blacks, as it was in an earlier era for white ethnics like the Irish (penetrating WASP-dominated positions from the 1890s to the 1930s), or for the Jews (penetrating WASP and Irish dominant milieux from the 1930s onward).

The initial focus of an emergent black transethnic politics must be to transform black elected officials into politicians elected by multi-ethnic votes, not simply black votes. Fortunately, a small cadre of transethnic black

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politicians has been forming for at least a decade. By 1986 this new breed of black politicians already had tested their skills—as mayors in Spokane (1 percent black), Pasadena (20 percent black), Roanoke (22 percent black), Charlotte (27 percent black), and Los Angeles (20 percent black). Congressional districts were also exhibiting transethnic penetration by 1986—by Katie Hall in Indiana's First Congressional District (20 percent black); by Alan Wheat in Missouri's Fifth Congressional District (20 percent black); and by Ronald Dellums in California's Eighth Congressional District (21 percent black). State legislative and executive offices were experiencing black transethnic penetration by 1986 too. An exemplary instance is L. Douglas Wilder, the first black lieutenant governor in Virginia—and also in the twentieth-century South—who is currently the Virginia Democratic party gubernatorial candidate.

What is unique about the transethnic politician? Such a politician must appeal across ethnic boundaries as a matter of course—sometimes rather hostile boundaries. Ronald Burris, for instance, faced this burden and overcame it when he ran for comptroller in Illinois in 1978. In his reelection in 1982 Burris mustered a vote of 2,327,779, larger than that of the victorious Republican governor. This looms as an enormous achievement when it is noted that Burris was the only Democratic candidate to win in both the white-dominated southern part of the state and the more racially mixed upstate section.

Above all, the demeanor of the transethnic politician should be pragmatic and/or technocratic. This enables the transethnic politician to do several rather difficult things: (1) allay anxieties of middle-class whites who value the evidence of skill-and-efficiency that this style conveys; (2) attract funds and volunteers from affluent white voters; (3) and simultaneously appear loyal to, or at least not fickle about, basic black policy concerns.

The watchwords of transethnic politicians are political maturity and sophistication. This is what Virginia's Wilder had in mind when he said, "Blacks cannot wait until there is a majority in a district or region to dream of running for office. We can't isolate ourselves in enclaves and retreat, leaving vast areas totally untapped and unchallenged." Yet numerous problems confront a transethnic penetration of politics by blacks. One is the failure of the politicians' own constituencies to appreciate their political maturity.

When Los Angeles Mayor Thomas Bradley failed in his 1982 gubernatorial campaign, he squarely faced his situation—losing by 52,000 votes out of 7.9 millions—by refusing to indulge in wound-licking rationalizations of his defeat. But among other black politicians—especially civil rights figures—a lot of immaturity characterized responses to Bradley's defeat. Carl Holman, head of the Urban Coalition, depicted it as the result of "racism-as-usual." This characterization was overdrawn if not just plain wrong, for close to three million whites did vote for Bradley! What Holman and other black leaders might have said was that not enough whites were yet ready for a transethnic black as governor of California, just as not enough WASP voters in 1928 were ready for a transethnic Irish politician, Al Smith, for the presidency.

Furthermore, self-criticism should have been the main focus of the black leaders' response to Bradley's near-miss. Some 600,000 eligible black voters failed to register for the gubernatorial election, a failure enormously costly to black politics locally and nationally.

A similar immaturity on the part of the black leadership toward the politics of transethnic penetration surfaced in May 1986 among black legislators in Pennsylvania. They rejected a white female legislator's application for membership in the black legislative caucus, despite the fact that her state assembly district is 30 percent black. This kind of ethnocentric solidarity is both misplaced in a pluralist democracy and politically counter-productive. Fortunately, this mindless ethnocentric solidarity was rejected a year later by black legislators in North Carolina, who in March 1987 accepted the application for black legislative caucus membership of a white legislator representing a district with a 25 percent black population.

What are the future patterns in the growth of

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black transethnic politics? In the long run, transethnic political engagements require a steady growth in the number of white voters who can shed race-bound preferences and are ready to experiment with transethnic politics. In the short run, the growth of transethnic politics also depends in good part on the quality of black politicians.

Above all, black politicians must increasingly articulate political methods, goals, and rhetoric that are unmistakably inclusive, not exclusive. As transethnic patterns evolve, black politics must encompass the concerns of Hispanics, women, farmers, white ethnics—that is, it must increasingly dovetail with those other groups that confront comparable needs stemming from the globalization of the American economy and the crisis of deindustrialization.

Here, the political role of Jesse Jackson takes on a special significance. Jackson's combination of black politics and general egalitarian politics is, at least over the long-run, intrinsically transethnic. Its basic thrust is to broaden pluralistic forces. The importance of extending inclusionary forces cannot be overemphasized.

Our various interest groups, because they are ideologically uncritical of the main trends in capitalist society, seldom package their bread-and-butter claims in terms antithetical to the system. Each group's advance is, therefore, followed by a return to a relative establishmentarian convergence with the system. But if the system is not to rigidify against new claimants (blacks and Hispanics for example)—which is a current backlash goal of the New Right—then it must be constantly nudged by political activism. The Jackson phenomenon is a crucial part of this activism. Without its continuation, our ability to correct systematic deficiencies in mobility, equality, and power weakens enormously.

Forging a New Progressivism

The political vacuum following the collapse of Great Society progressivism forged during the Kennedy-Johnson era is still with us. What is to be done?

There are two basic groups of issues related to black American politics that can help forge a new progressivism. One is linked to black concerns—the accountability of black political elites to their black constituencies. The other concerns political apathy and reaction among the white poor.

• *Countering Self-Serving Elites.* The successful entry of blacks into political life over the past twenty years inevitably produced differences with regard to political and social benefits. Although the rhetoric surrounding the political advances of any claimant group is robustly optimistic, political realism requires a more measured perspective. In general, political benefits, using Charles Hamilton's classification, are of two types: "divisible benefits" and "indivisible benefits."[4] Some political benefits, or payoffs, take the form of aggregate or public benefits, such as better crime protection and better schools in black communities; while other benefits are strictly private or class benefits, such as cabinet appointments, contracts to businesses, zoning variances, tax abatements, influence peddling, and so on.

This discrepancy between public and class benefits will in time become a central focus of contests in black politics. The reason is simple: Benefits of the class type typically outpace the public type, owing to the advantages of upper-strata constituencies. Over the past twenty years of black political advance, a huge power imbalance has come into being through the increase of class benefits as against public benefits in black communities—an imbalance that is often sharpened through corruption and illegality.

Overall, the dynamics of political benefits accompanying black governance fits the candid formulation of Wilbur Rich, a major analyst of Detroit politics: "The new patronage is a spoils system for the [black] middle and upper classes. The benefits of the new system are not available to the working class [not to mention the poor]."[5] Though white power structures (firms, banks, insurance companies, retailers, and so on) prevail as the owning classes in cities, the new black political class and its black bourgeois networks nonetheless exercise significant political and economic clout through the mayor's office, councillors, zoning and licensing boards, and so on. To date, only

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when political need dictates, does this regulatory clout operate for working class and poor blacks.

In cities like Atlanta, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago, at least 50 percent of high-level occupations held by blacks are in the public sector. What is more, major capital mobilization and formation on behalf of an expanding black capitalist sector has been closely linked to black governance in such cities. According to Peter Eisinger, a major analyst of Atlanta, "[D]ata for Newark, Detroit, and Atlanta show plainly that black participation in public-purchasing contracts has swelled from virtually nothing at the beginning of the 1970s to a substantial share by 1980."[6]

This pattern will occur in every city or state where black political incorporation takes place. For example, whereas between 1972 and 1974 minority firms gained only 2 percent of $472 million in public construction contracts in Chicago, this white power exclusion of black entrepreneurs ended with the election of Mayor Harold Washington in April, 1983.

Furthermore, in both Atlanta and Detroit the participation of black firms in city contracting and purchasing spiraled in the late 1970s. Thus, in 1977 black firms claimed 16 percent of Atlanta's $227 million expenditure and in Detroit black firms cornered 20 percent of a $100 million expenditure, and this figure did not include "the fact that substantial spending—for repairs and maintenance, for example—is handled by individual departments and does not come through central purchasing."[7]

Though these instances of capital formation for emerging black capitalists reveal a typical pattern, there are also numerous instances of gigantic wealth accumulation associated with the new black governance. One example is Theodore Hagans, the black developer in Washington, D.C., who was chosen by black politicians in 1975 as chief developer of the $500 million Fort Lincoln New Town in the northeast section of Washington. Hagans was a close personal confidant of Mayor Marion Barry—"a friendship . . . forged before Barry took office in 1979," according to the *Washington Post*. Hagans chaired Barry's extravagant inaugural party in 1979. Among the many payoffs flowing from this friendship was a city-induced bid for Hagans to participate in developing a $300-million project near the Metro Center subway stop downtown. At the time of his death in a plane crash he was also a member of the board of directors of District Cablevision Inc., a firm vying for the lucrative cable franchise in the District.

Washington, D.C. also makes it clear that the black political class is no more immune from lawbreaking and norm-flouting than the white-ethnic political manipulators who preceded it in power. Prominent among the numerous criminal politicians in Washington was Ivanhoe Donaldson, close to Mayor Barry for many years—and, alas, still close following his release from prison this year—imprisoned for allocating some $200,000 of job training funds to private use. Donaldson is alleged to have stolen over $2 million but he pleaded guilty to $200,000 and further inquiry ceased. More recently, a study of housing department records in Washington revealed that former deputy mayor Curtis McClinton was a senior partner in the Southeast Limited Partnership Inc., which leased space to the city for homeless families at $2,662 monthly rent per unit.

• *Developing Watchdog Activists.* Clearly, correcting this tilt of benefits toward black elites should be high on the agenda of a new progressivism in black politics. While this task must be addressed by black politicians themselves, its mobilization as a political concern will depend on a new element in Afro-American political leadership—watchdog activists. Groups like Fair Share and ACORN are prototypes of this kind of watchdog activists now required in black urban communities. While their long-run goal should focus on democratizing city governance, they should also pursue a short-run agenda associated with several fundamental needs of lower-strata urban blacks:

(1) They must monitor the delivery of basic services, such as crime management and police. After some twenty years of black political incorporation, it is a scandal that no section of the black political class in this country has given serious attention to the high crime rates in black communities—typically

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black-on-black crime. Equally scandalous is that no major segment of the black intelligentsia (journalists especially, but academics too) has taken up the crime issue, mobilizing and crusading around its regulation as they did with the issues of civil rights and political empowerment in the 1950s and 1960s. This major failure of black leadership can no longer be tolerated.

(2) Another area of concern to lower-strata blacks that watchdog activists must monitor is the poor performance of the education system. Again, it is truly a scandal that twenty years after being incorporated into the political system the black political class has not developed a strategy to reverse the production of inadequately educated working-class and poor black students by city school systems. Watchdog activists can play a role in galvanizing working class and poor families around the education issue, in criticizing the indifference of many black politicians to the crisis in education, and in politicizing that crisis at election time—something still lacking in most cities headed by black mayors.

(3) Finally, while the housing crisis affecting a large segment of the black lower stratum requires federal intervention, there is much that can be done by the black political class. To date, it has done very little. A tour I took recently through West Philadelphia revealed blocks of essentially solid brick-and-stone housing in various states of decay. The same would turn up in black neighborhoods in Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, and so on. It is reasonable to believe that a combination of public and private sector strategies, sparked by the black political class, could rehabilitate decaying housing. But what is first required is a fierce effort to galvanize the housing issue politically, a task waiting for watchdog activists. Middle-class and elite blacks and their associations have to be jolted out of their indifference, and white middle-class groups, the decent ones among liberals and even some conservatives, have also to get mobilized around the housing issue—a "natural" for watchdog activists.

In suggesting an important new progressive role in black politics for political activists, let me elaborate the qualities required. First, while it is likely to evolve out of those who are politically aware among working-class and even poor families (union families particularly), recruits can also be expected to come from the progressive middle class, especially college students and young professionals. That black college students and young professionals have not come forward to become watchdog activists is pathetic.

As black-is-beautiful and anti-whitey militancy waned in the late 1970s and early 1980s—seemingly having satisfied a cathartic need among black youth and many adults—no sustained form of black activism, with some sense of serious political concern, has emerged. Indeed, middle-class black students (and working-class youth, alas) on campuses at both black and white colleges are reviving ordinary hedonistic associations such as Greek-letter fraternities and sororities ("Black Greeks"). Though they package themselves as helping-hand or samaritan groups—and a few branches of "Black Greeks" do have small tutoring and voter registration programs—for 90 percent of their activity and resources "Black Greeks" are mostly a black-bourgeois affair, pretty much as E. Franklin Frazier portrayed them thirty years ago in *Black Bourgeoisie* and as Spike Lee scathingly lampoons them in his brilliant film *School Daze*.

Yet we may hope that some watchdog activists will emerge in due course. Progressive white students and young professionals, already crucial in providing activists for Fair Share, ACORN, and similar local groups, can be expected to advance the watchdog function in black city politics. Young white professionals, in fact, are already surfacing in cities like Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, and elsewhere to provide banking skills for neighborhood programs on housing rehabilitation or industrial relocation, among other things.[8] A few black churches in major cities have turned to neighborhood activism too, though, in light of the black churches' crucial role in the civil rights mobilization a generation ago, it is baffling that black churches have not responded comparably to the multitude of urban crises.

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Outreach to the White Poor

A major assist for a new progressivism can be created, I believe, through a black-led movement to awaken the white American poor. Their indifference has its roots, of course, in the bitter tradition of white racism. Scapegoating the nonwhite poor offers many whites—poor and nonpoor alike—the devastating illusion that poverty is primarily a problem for black and Hispanic folk. In reality, however, there are some thirty-six million poor people, about 25 million of them white, located in border states and in the South, but increasingly spreading around the country. In Boston, for example, surveys show that some 25 percent of Irish families are working poor, with around 15 percent at poverty level.

Of course, it is not easy for black leadership to undertake an outreach-to-the-white-poor movement. No segment of black leadership in this century has had much success, if any, in forging coalitions with poor whites, though the Southern Tenant Farmers Union during the 1930s did achieve a brief linkage of black and white farmers. Still, there's a first time for everything.

It will require the very best of black leadership, people with skills and gifts of moral suasion, people who can forgive (if not forget) white racist transgressions. In short, figures with the attributes of a Martin Luther King. An inkling of how working-class and poor whites can adjust to black leadership has come out of the bitter coal miners' strike in Virginia, where white strikers have invited Jesse Jackson to address rallies and walk picket lines with them.

Blacks and the Crisis of American Conservatism

Throughout this decade a major part of American conservatism—especially that associated with Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority—has openly embraced the regime in South Africa. This disgraceful posture towards apartheid is deeply disturbing. The message, with roots deep in American conservatism's past, is that at no point in the twentieth century have claims by black people—whether in Africa or the Western hemisphere—for political and social parity gained active support or sympathy from American conservative leaders and intellectuals, religious or secular.

The changing composition of American conservatism in recent years has made little difference in its posture toward black people. Parochial conservatives evolved first among low-status WASPs (1880s–1950s) and were joined via the Wallacite movement in the 1960s by working-class and middle-class white ethnics. They have remained cool toward the parity claims of blacks, here and abroad. And though plutocratic conservatives evolved first among a section of high-status WASPs (1880s–1950s) and were joined via Nixon and Reagan in the 1970s–1980s by the upper strata among white ethnic groups—including a Jewish section—they continue their indifference to black aspirations.

But for the liberal minority among WASP elites—joined, of course, by liberal elites among Catholics and Jews—black American claims would have never reached such federal legislation as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the War on Poverty programs. This begrudging inclusion of blacks into the American social contract underlines the crisis of decency at the core of American conservatism.

Why this crisis at all? Surely American conservatism has had and now has more than enough talented thinkers to articulate a politics of fairness, even if within establishmentarian boundaries. The answer lies elsewhere—in a failure of will and moral purpose at the heart of American conservatism, especially a stubborn failure to shed the infantile phobias governing the white conservatives' perception of blacks.

An instance of this moral gap in the soul of American conservatism's posture toward black Americans is to be seen in a recent issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. A Harvard historian and two other conservative (really New Right) historians published letters in the May 24th issue defending American conservatism's refusal to admit the need for affirmative action—a reform that can help redress the racist exclusion of blacks from opportunity.

For these New Right historians a major limitation of affirmative action is that, as a form of restitution, it exacts an unfair price. They argue that today's whites (white men, since affirmative action benefits white women)

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would have to surrender some measure of upward mobility in favor of blacks, even though they were not direct perpetrators of racist crimes from Reconstruction to the 1960s. This argument is, however, utterly false.

No serious political analyst applies this formulation to, say, indemnities imposed on the German state for the destruction of property, careers, and lives during World War II. German politicians and citizens who did not commit the atrocities of the Nazi state have accepted their liability in international and civil law restitution.

That intelligent thinkers like Charles Fried, Nathan Glazer, and James Q. Wilson have failed to raise the moral vision of American conservatism on this fundamental issue vis-à-vis affirmative action is disturbing in its callousness. The lacunae in the reverse-discrimination argument can be answered in the acute observation of the great German writer Günter Grass. Speaking of what he saw at Dachau, he said, "[W]hat unbelievable crimes had been done in the name of my . . . generation and . . . what guilt, knowingly and unknowingly, our people had brought upon themselves."

The moral lapse in American conservatism's stance toward our racist legacy is apparent in Joseph Epstein's recent claim that black Americans are not valid victims of racist exclusion and oppression.[9] He opposes the civil rights movement's "appeal to guilt" on the spurious grounds that guilt "is entirely negative." "What are you supposed to do," Epstein asks, "if someone blames you for slavery, a hideous institution, to be sure, but one defunct for more than a century? Say you are sorry it ever happened? Should you clear your throat and announce that there are historical reasons for some of these things?"

I dare say Joseph Epstein would not indulge this unseemly rhetorical wordplay with, say, the vicious history of anti-Semitism in the West and the Holocaust. Why, then, such a shallow and callous intellectual posture toward our racist legacy—a legacy steeped in violence, murder, mayhem, authoritarian coercion in the South, identity traumatization, and blood? Have New Right intellectuals lost all sense of decency when treating black concerns? It takes a curious mindset to deny to black Americans a valid victim status in the context of America's past, in the same way that it takes a twisted mindset to deny victim status to the Irish in the context of English history, or to Armenians in the context of Turkish history.

The failure of New Right intellectuals to undertake a response to our racist legacy is also disturbing in its crass indifference to America's finest contributions to democratic civilization—our pragmatism, our searching inventiveness with respect to the basic moral, institutional, and structural imperatives of a free and egalitarian—a fair—society. Like the Great Depression, and like floods, drought, and tornadoes that ravage our farmers and local communities, surely our racist legacy must also be seen as demanding moral and material attention and resources from the national community. But neither the New Right nor the broader ranks of American conservatism will grant our racist (and sexist) legacy equal status with these other moral-structural imperatives in American life.

This leads me to ask: What manner of people are American conservatives anyway, both old and new, if they cannot admit America's debt to injured millions of black folk—injured under the color of law and state authority—and come up with ideas, norms, and structures to get on with task of paying for it? □

Notes

[1] See *Monthly Labor Review* (June 1982) p. 30.

[2] See Martin Kilson, *Politics of Inclusion: Blacks in American Political Culture* (Forthcoming).

[3] *Public Opinion* (August-September, 1985).

[4] Charles Hamilton, "Political Access, Minority Participation, and the New Normalcy" (unpublished paper, 1984) p. 25.

[5] Wilbur Rich, "The Impact of Public Authorities on Urban Politics," in Michael Preston, ed. *The New Black Politics* (Longmans: New York, 1988), p. 217.

[6] Peter Eisinger, "Black Mayors and the Politics of Racial Economic Advancements," in Harlan Hahn and Charles Levine, eds. *Reading in Urban Politics* (New York, 1984) p. 252.

[7] Peter Eisinger, *The Politics of Displacement: Racial and Ethnic Transition in Three American Cities* (Academic Press: New York, 1980), p. 164.

[8] For a case study of a successful neighborhood revitalization program in Chicago put in place by an interracial coalition—a middle-aged white banker, a white female activist and organizer, and two black community technicians—see David Osborne, "A Poverty Program That Works," the *New Republic* (May 8, 1989).

[9] Joseph Epstein, "The Joys of Victimhood," *New York Times Magazine* (July 2, 1989).

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Ferenc Fehèr

A LOSS OF REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION?

On the Bicentennial of the French Revolution

Viewed from the outside, bicentennial France seems to be resigning its major claim to political glory, its jealously guarded national treasure: the tradition of the Great Revolution. Foreign observers have noticed a sharp contrast between the republican glamour of the 1889 centennial and this year's routine celebration in which some hostile reactions have appeared. Nor has right-wing influence on the cultural scene gone unnoticed. French booksellers report that the *Vendée** has become *le dernier cri:* popular fiction sympathetic to the Vendéans sells more than at any time in the last forty years.

An "academically respectable" counterrevolution is also rampant.[1] Nor could Marie Le Pen and his ultraright National Front miss the opportunity. In an interview, Le Pen contributed to historical wisdom the observation that what was beneficial in the Revolution had already been realized in the monarchy; the rest was just savage butchery, a historical training ground for communism and nazism. He also recommended to the Pope the sanctification of the executed King Louis XVI. Even the great historian François Furet, author of *La Révolution, 1770–1880* and (with Mona Ozouf) co-editor of the monumental *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution Française,* which are the only original works published for the bicentennial, remarked that the anniversary is the burying of the Revolution.

*A royalist uprising from 1793 to 1796 originating in the Vendée region and completely pacified only by Napoleon.

And yet, behind the cacophony of shrill voices and a visible public indifference toward the celebration and its theatricality (occasional pop "for and against" demonstrations), a very serious discussion is gradually emerging that reflects major issues of the modern age. In order to understand this, it is important to see the precise shades of clashing opinions.

Whose View?

Rightist hostility to the memory of the Revolution is hardly a surprise, merely its longevity. Virulent remnants of the royalist tradition were customary in the last two decades of the Third Republic. One might have expected them to disappear with the fall of Vichy, but these days they thrive on the failures of the Bolshevik regimes. Rightist authors use and abuse analytic license: They characterize the Revolution as an early version of the Gulag.

The Communist homage was also predictable. Its only novel feature is a fading self-confidence. After all, today it is quite a difficult job to extol the grandeur of 1793 because there are those who see in it the forerunner of Stalin's dictatorship. Even the major tenet of the Marxist philosophy of history—historical evolution—is called into question across left and right. The main loser is the "common republican front," the conglomerate of moderate leftist as well as centrist parties and political forces and the organizer of

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the official celebration, which has little to add, beyond republican clichés, to the laudatory speeches. The emptiness of republican rhetoric makes the skeptical questions of François Furet and his circle (who reside in the Institut Raymond Aron) relevant and challenging. Although the (centrist, not rightist) Furet group is numerically insignificant, its interpretations embrace theoretical and political consequences far beyond the sensationalism common to these debates.

When Furet calls the public celebrations of the republican mainstream, as well as the rightist reactions to them, "theatre without an audience," his words make a sociological point.[2] He contends that there is no longer any risk in playing at revolution or counterrevolution since the French Revolution has come to an end. (Whereas there was an enormous risk, both for actors and audiences, in "playing the Mountain or the Gironde"* in the Second Republic of 1848, or in "playing the neo-Jacobin" in the Paris Commune since the French Revolution was then still alive in the consciousness of the people.)[3] When Furet declared that the "subject is cold," many were needlessly shocked. The meaning of the historian's dictum reads as follows: The French Revolution has come to an end insofar as its great task has been completed. In modern public life, democracy, the representative system, has been given life as the only conceivable establishment for rational politics. So the Revolution may not be alive, but neither is it dead. It is immortal.

But since the century-long "primal scene" of political modernity was particularly traumatic, forgetfulness after analysis is the best therapy Furet can recommend. Imposing the great drama of the past on a present life can have only one, undesirable outcome: the erosion of the democratic consensus that French society (and modern society in general) has bought at such an exorbitant price. Furet's emphasis on this newly born democratic consensus is a clear reference to Raymond Aron's profound observation that French society lost even its minimal consensus after 1789 and did not find it again for almost two centuries.

Ironically, in his "therapeutic reading" of the great story, Furet seems to return to Clémenceau's famous dictum: *La Révolution est un bloc* (which can perhaps best be rendered in English as "The Revolution is an indivisible whole"). Clémenceau attacked those who tried to take their pick among the distinct periods and protagonists of the Revolution. His message was that if you want a revolutionary national tradition, you have to buy the whole story, rhyme, chapter, verse. There is irony in Furet's return to Clémenceau, if only because Furet was an important member of the "revisionist" wave among those historians who decades ago questioned the homogeneity of the story; also, because he is vehemently anti-Jacobin.

In an interesting exchange of roles, it is now the far left that is warming up the theory of the plurality of revolutions within the Revolution. Richard Cobb, the excellent historian and apologist of popular violence, returns, in a remark made on the occasion of the bicentennial, to an interpretation first put forward by Babeuf.** For Cobb, 1789 is an insignificant year; the only relevant narrative is that of 1792–94, the years of popular action and dictatorship, up to the reaction of Thermidor.***

There is an understandable patriotism in Furet's new commitment to the story "in full." He has so much admiration for the Revolution, the paradigm of modern politics, that he does not want to hear about its protototalitarian features. Furet thus gets in his own way when he refuses to see the process through which the Jacobin past was appropriated by Bolshevik ideology and put to fatal use. However, this causes a methodological inconsistency in his work because one of Furet's major contribu-

*Representing various revolutionary factions in the revolution's legislative assembly and in the Convention, those seated at the highest level (hence, the Montagnards) and those whose leaders came from the Department of the Gironde.

** François Noël (Gracchus)Babeuf—extreme left of the Revolution, edited *Voice of the People*, executed in 1797.

*** Overthrow of Robespierre on 9th Thermidor (July 27), 1794.

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tions to political theory is his insistence on the learning processes through which modernity repeatedly creates and recreates itself. He constantly emphasizes that modern societies, especially modern political systems, are not "natural" or "organic." They are "arbitrary" or "artificial" in the sense that they are the product of ongoing inventions, of consciously designed projects, of their drive to explore the unknown continents of statecraft. And it goes without saying that this learning process has negative elements within it.

Challenging Furet

Two major objections of political relevance can be made to Furet's reading of the Revolution. First, it was an audacious step on his part to extend the time space of the Revolution, which is normally concluded either with Thermidor or on the eighteenth of Brumaire (November 9, 1799 with Napoleon's first steps to imperial power), or with the first restoration of the Bourbons in 1814, or, at the very least, on the battlefield of Waterloo (1815). But if, as Furet assumes, the French Revolution continued far beyond the natural lives of all the actors who had initiated and participated in it, then Marx was right in at least one respect: France was the classic country of political revolution in the nineteenth century. But what then prevents France from continuing its political revolution (even if not in a Jacobin-Bolshevik sense) in this century?

Are we obliged to share Furet's conviction that the representative parliamentary system in general, and its compromise-ridden form in the second phase of the Fifth Republic in particular, is the ultimate word in statecraft? Did not the French Revolution (in 1793, in 1871, perhaps even in 1848) give life to another major form of democratic rule, that is, to direct (grassroots) democracy? Further, is it empirically true that the French Revolution ended with the parliamentarism of the Third Republic? Is it not rather more appropriate, once we operate with so extended a concept of the "French Revolution," to interpret the storms of the Third Republic around the turn of the century as a preparation for Vichy, the rightist revolution, or as the continuation of a counter-revolution that attacked representative parliamentary democracy? Is the characterization of 1968 as a social protest against an overly authoritarian state, in the name of social autonomy, not acceptable as a possible interpretation of this complex event? If it is, was not 1968 a continuation of the French Revolution in its "extended" sense? For while May 1968 undoubtedly was revolutionary theater, it was certainly not without an audience!

All these rhetorical questions suggest that the "conservative" Furet has, in fact, introduced a highly explosive principle in the historiography of the Revolution, one that he cannot control: the possible extension of the Revolution's history beyond the lifetime of its protagonists. Thus, unwittingly, Furet interprets modern French history as a chronicle of "permanent revolution," though not in the Trotskyist sense. Of course, his interpretation is not "boundless," with space for any poisonous myth of political romanticism. But neither is it a closed system to which nothing can be added. The politically committed and rational reader is at liberty to follow in Furet's footsteps by deciding how far to take the story, and what to include in it.

A second major flaw of Furet's narrative is the complete separation of the social from the political. The autonomy of the political is one of Furet's major beliefs in objecting to the Marxist sociology of "base" and "superstructure," and I do not intend to question his judgment on this issue. However, no one is more familiar than Furet the historian with the role that "the long memory" of the French bourgeoisie played in the terrible massacres after the June 1848 workers' uprising (which was followed by the ascension to power of Napoleon's nephew, Louis Bonaparte), and after the Paris Commune of 1871. This bourgeoisie was created by the Revolution and it learned to close its ranks by the recollection of *sans culotte* terror and the economy of maximization (whose modern name is command economy). As Furet himself proves, this "great fear" was one of the major reasons why the bourgeoisie was so reluctant to grant universal suffrage for a century. True enough,

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after World War II this bourgeoisie learned how to handle "the social question" with considerable adaptability. But in modern times social issues, just like political forms, present an ongoing process in which the satisfaction of needs generates new demands. Is it so certain that the propertied classes of today have shed their "long memory" altogether? In other words, has the counterrevolution also come to an end?

Beyond the Boundaries

Immanuel Wallerstein remarked recently that the obsessive focusing on the domestic significance of the great event reduces its global relevance. And how about the rest of us? he asked defiantly.[4] As with its domestic effects, the worldwide debate on the French Revolution is not so much abating as it is changing. The central issue is, not surprisingly, very close to what concerns the French. "Has the heartbeat of the revolution come to a standstill?" asks Jürgen Habermas in a recent contribution to the debate. His answer is, predictably, in the negative; and meanwhile Italian statesmen and philosophers cheer the birth of modernity in discussing 1789.

But the world is neither a cheering squad nor a debating club, and the problems posed by the memory of that great event have remained very serious if also very ambiguous. For Kant it was proof positive of "progress in nature." Has modernity really developed fully? Have we finally, despite the obvious and incessant need for drastic social changes, come home? In this sense, did the Great Revolution give us a vision of how to transform our world without aspiring to transcend it? Or, alternatively, was the French Revolution only the first explosion in a chain reaction of explosions that will reduce the present world to pulp and from which a brand-new and brave one will emerge? This is, indeed, the question. As we now know, the second alternative is the Jacobin-Bolshevik scenario whose practical and moral consequences are all too familiar. It was with reference to the latter, and only in this limited sense, that I concluded my book on Jacobinism with the proposition that it is about time to close the French Revolution.[5]

All the analysts who contend that the flames of the Great Revolution are not entirely extinguished—that one or several aspects of the legacy still live—are really saying that we have to revisit that event periodically. This argument is, however, not the same as transforming the narrative of the Revolution into an unshakable canon. There is latitude in interpretation. We are not confined to the actual chronology of the events; we are not compelled to choose 1789 as against 1793, or vice versa. We live amid our own limitations, but we are not obligated to accept the limitations of past actors. Babeuf may have felt justified in dismissing all periods of the Revolution prior to the dictatorship of the Mountain (and Cobb may continue to echo this judgment or prejudice). But we are not obliged to imitate Babeuf. Nor are we captive of a dogmatic liberalism for which only 1789 and the Declaration can be accepted as a living heritage while the inchoate struggles around social issues are anathema. Even those for whom human rights are crucial, and who do not believe that the politics of the terror would alleviate mass suffering, may still (unlike Hannah Arendt) hail the memory of the great Revolution that brought "the social question" to a just place on the modern political agenda.

Yet Arendt, in her famous and controversial *On Revolution,* did formulate a fundamental dilemma: the contrast between the "American" and the "French" models of revolution. In Arendt's view, the major characteristics of the "American" model, apart from its dismissal of social issues, was *constitutio libertatis*—the fundamentals of liberty as expressed in the Constitution, in the rule of law. Hence its surprising political stability. At the same time, the "French" model, whose major actors bent rules and shelved constitutions on behalf of what they deemed the "happiness of the people,"wrought havoc on French (as well as European) history and politics. The end result of this model was an outright loss of the very sense of how to construct a constitution. The contrast between the two models of permanence versus instability remains a correct and profound observation even if one thoroughly

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dissents from Arendt's hostility to the political relevance of social issues.

This sharp contrast has remained till quite recently imprinted on the fabric of European politics. Liberal European activists were exclusively interested in free institutions and the free market; they remained indifferent to or suspicious of the "social question." At the same time, those acting radically in the name and on behalf of the victims of the market system could not care less about the "fraud" of institutionalized democracy. Whenever they gained the upper hand, they invariably abolished rights and constitutions and imposed a command economy based on coercion and, often, on terror. That is why the unresolved dilemma of reconciling the "American" and the "French" models of revolution has moved to the top of the agenda in bicentennial debates. And it will remain with us for a long time.

Can whole nations survive a process in which their political institutions, which also determine the way they live, are forever changing? This is the question posed by the partisans of the "American model," who believe in permanent solutions and stable institutions. And without doubt, "permanent political revolutions," with their complete lack of elementary stability, generate the worst political neuroses. But can dogmatic restraints be imposed on political invention and self-creativity for the sake of stability? This is the question posed by the advocates of the "French" model. Self-imposed limitations on political imagination introduce conservatism in every area of social life. Such limitations can only be instituted if we are convinced that modernity has reached, politically and socially, its absolute limits. But such a belief can be only a dogma, not a rational certainty. In all probability, there is no universal answer to the dilemma, no grand theory that can guide us in all of our future political options. The only advice the political actor can extract from history at this point is to bear in mind the negative consequences resulting from too sharp a contrast between the "French" and the "American" models.

Legacies of the Revolution

Yet it would indeed be a crime against the future of modernity to stifle, in the name of "permanence," the political inventiveness of the French revolutionary tradition (an inventiveness that had, admittedly, grown out of desperation and a cycle of crises). There are at least three major areas where the French Revolution has passed on to us a crucial but unclear, therefore onerous, legacy. The first is the relationship between the representative and direct forms of democracy. It was the lasting merit of Hannah Arendt to have highlighted the significance of the subterranean life of direct democracy in the Paris districts, a whole continent of political imagination. This underground world had its excellent Marxist historian, Albert Soboul; but, with the sole exception of Cornelius Castoriadis, it has had no theoretical champions. Direct democracy cannot be discussed cavalierly. It had its intermittent resurrections in the Paris Commune, in the Soviets of the 1905 and February 1917 revolutions, in the revolutionary workers' councils of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, in the people's councils of the recent Burmese uprising.

There are countless critics of direct democracy. Furet emphasizes the centrality of will, instead of interest, in this kind of self-government; and he adds that, while interest is fully rational, will is only partially so. Therefore, he concludes, direct self-government cannot be the medium of rational politics. Other critics point to the absence of liberal checks and balances in direct democracy, hence the ubiquity of violence in all of its appearances. The ineptitude of self-government in cost-effective economic management has been emphasized by both the Kremlin and Wall Street. Finally, the emerging feminist critique has given relevance to the accusation that, so far, direct democracies have always been communities of equal brothers. From which feminists quite properly conclude that women need to have their rights guaranteed outside their immediate milieu.

These are complex issues, with no ready-made answers. But the discussion, as well as the social experimentation with new forms of self-government, will certainly continue the tradition of the revolutionary districts of Paris.

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The French Revolution was the first great political upheaval that replaced a personal sovereign with the sovereignty of the nation, introducing the era of nationalism. "Nation" may be read as a code for defining our differences from others—that we are "us," not "them," that we are not the sum total of the subjects of a particular sovereign, distinct from other "sum totals," not specimens of a particular race, not members of one or another religion, not a region within the geographical framework of a continent—but a coherent and different whole. Paradoxically, it was this recognition of differences that became almost the only universally accepted political innovation of the French Revolution. Whether nationalist movements were in alliance with the French cause, or implacably hostile to it, whether or not, at a later stage, they were familiar with the Revolution, they invariably imitated this French innovation. Yet the negative definition of nation as "our difference" highlights the very problem that came into the world with 1789 and its aftermath. We know that, as a nation, "we are different" but we have very little idea of what is the common bond that makes us different together. Hence the intellectual certainty, the emotional emphasis and the inherent irrationality of nationalism, as an offspring of the French Revolution. As attested most recently by the debate among German historians, we have never ceased pondering this particular riddle given us by the sphinx of the Revolution.

Fraternity, the third constituent of the Revolution, appeared to the participants as the solution to the riddle in the events of 1789. With the aid of fraternity they could feel themselves different and common at the same time. But we are all familiar with the very short political biography of fraternity. It died with Napoleon and was intermittently awakened for short stretches to more of a symbolic than an actual life in the First International and in Wilson's dream—the League of Nations. Today, it is entirely out of fashion. The most conspicuously provincial feature of the domestic celebration in France is precisely the absence of any reference to this "unsophisticated" idea. One wonders, however, whether this refined contempt for naive and pious fraternity is indeed confirmed by how the millions of "unsophisticated" men and women feel. Could this hostility be the offspring of a rampant philosophical hostility against all kinds of universalism? And the answer, a fairly surprising one, comes from an unexpected quarter. In an interview, Yassir Arafat, a politician hailed, hated, and suspected alike, declared his movement a "daughter of the French revolution," and he emphasized the undying presence of 1789 in what we now call "the Third World."[6] This statement is important because it could not have been made by the Ayatollah Khomeini. And it teaches Europeans, the direct heirs of the Revolution, who increasingly believed that their precious great narrative remained confined to their own culture, a double lesson. On the one hand, they must not be overconfident about their knowledge of the world. On the other, they must not be so skeptical as to believe that the heartbeat of their greatest revolution has indeed come to a complete standstill. □

Notes

[1] See for example, *Lire*, N. 137, February, 1987, p. 34; Reynald Secher, *Le génocide franco-français, La Vendée - Vengée* (Paris: PUF, 1988); and Jacques Solé, *La Révolution en questions* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1988).

[2] When Furet mentions "theatre," he refers to works by Max Gallo on the left (*Lettre ouverte de Maximilien Robespierre sur les nouveaux muscadins* [Paris: Albin Michel, 1988]) and to several polemical statements and prefaces by Pierre Chaunu on the right.

[3] The most complete statement about the Revolution having come to an end is Furet's important new book, *La Révolution, De Turgot à Jules Ferry, 1770–1890* (Paris: Hachette, 1988).

[4] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The French Revolution and the World System," in "The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity," special issue of *Social Research*, Spring 1989.

[5] Ferenc Fehèr: *The Frozen Revolution (An Essay on Jacobinism)*, (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 154.

[6] *L'Espresso*, January 29, 1989, p. 49.

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David Bromwich

THE FUTURE OF TRADITION

Notes on the Crisis of the Humanities

Two distinct topics have been involved in the recent debate about the future of the humanities, and the worst failure of the debate is that it hardly seems to notice the distinction. The topics in question are the traditional study of the humanities and the study of tradition in the humanities. Attacks on the first tend to shade into attacks on the second, without understanding the very different challenge this entails. At the same time, defenses of the second often try to cover the first as well. Because I want to sketch a position here that I have not seen argued elsewhere, it will be best to start with a disclaimer. I have nothing to say for or against what is now called the traditional study of the humanities; though, in America, few scholarly practices are of more than three generations' standing: a fact that ought to make us suspicious of theories which hold such practices to be either altogether oppressive or altogether sacred. At any rate I offer no argument here about the older patterns of teaching and research. Rather, I aim to defend the study of tradition as such. If I am right, the humanities are the proper place for that study to go on. And the future of that study may have something to do with the future of political liberalism and of the Enlightenment ideals of rational discussion and individual choice. I write in the belief that political liberalism and these particular Enlightenment ideals are both, on balance, good. I cannot imagine a good society that would not assure their survival. But in the current discussions of higher education, in the crude satire of the right and the protective clichés of the left, it has often seemed unclear how strong a consensus remains in favor of the survival of these things.

Another name for the subject of the debate about the humanities today is "liberal education." The phrase is still in common use because it has a sound that is flattering to Americans. But, in practice, the thing has never been as common as the phrase. The process it names cannot, in fact, be formulated as an official policy or embodied in a state curriculum, for it describes a tacit way of thinking and acting in a moral community. A liberal education tries to assure the persistence of a culture of responsive individuals—people who, in the course of a long experiment in learning, will have discovered the habits of attention that make it possible to be at once thoughtful and critical citizens. Where the future of the university is discussed, or just the future of the humanities, what appears to be most under challenge now is precisely what this understanding of a liberal education had presupposed: the value of coming to know a tradition that is not the property of any party. A tradition on this view, far from being fixed forever, may be shaped by the voluntary choices of readers and thinkers. Indeed, it exists not only as something to know, but as something to interpret and reform. But a difficult paradox holds together the idea of a nonrestrictive tradition. Before it can be reformed intelligently, it must be known adequately; and yet, unless one recognizes first that it *can* be reformed, one will come to know

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it only as a matter of rote—with the result that the knowledge of a tradition will seem as unimaginative a business as the knowledge of an alphabet or a catechism. Difficult as it is, the liberal understanding of tradition was for a long time promoted by American politicians, shared by public servants, exemplified by artists, critics, and freelance citizens. The process of sifting the tradition still continues, or we would be dead as a society. Our agreement that it ought to continue, however, is weaker now than it has been for several generations.

Given the practical need for coherence in education, what could ever replace the idea of tradition that I have been summarizing? There is a possible answer: an idea of authority. One must go slowly here for the subject, properly pursued, would take us the length of another essay; and a few examples will have to support the claim that an appeal to authority is often the opposite of an appeal to tradition. We are familiar with the sort of authoritarian (Jerry Falwell) who knows that it is wrong to teach children the theory of natural selection; and with the sort (William Bennett) who knows that it is wrong to teach grown-ups the history of thought without a religious overlay: the former has more-than-scientific, the latter more-than-historical, reasons for the authority he invokes. But there is another sort of authoritarian, only now becoming familiar, who believes "Professors should have less freedom of expression than writers and artists, because professors are supposed to be creating a better community" (Professor Barbara Johnson of the Department of English, Harvard University, as quoted by Robert Detlefsen in the *New Republic*, April 10, 1989). Doubtless Johnson too has her reasons. But they are no more the reasons of a liberal or an educator than are Bennett's or Falwell's. Extremes meet: the fundamentalist of the parochial religious community has the same foresight regarding what is "better," and the same methods for achieving it, as the fundamentalist of the parochial academic community. Both ignore, or deride, the teaching of a strong tradition of tolerance in politics and learning. This seems the place to declare a polemical intent in the pages that follow. I hope to sharpen a certain general anxiety about what the authoritarians *say* into an active distrust of what they are likely to *do*. It would, I think, be a good thing if universities did not follow the example of some other institutions and become a staging ground for contests between rival communitarian orthodoxies.

One further preliminary word about tradition and authority. I have spent much of the last two years reading the pamphlet wars on higher education in America: on budgets, demographics, first principles, open-mindedness and "the souls of America's young people"; the proceedings of left-wing think tanks and accounts of the same proceedings in right-wing journals of culture; with assorted *cris de coeur* from editorial writers and unattached observers, as well as exchanges of bewildered anecdotes in the letters columns of newspapers. In all this vast body of recent literature, the words "tradition" and "authority" are used pretty steadily, and they are used interchangeably. The confusion seems to be widespread. Yet a tradition may itself supply grounds for appeal against the exercise of arbitrary authority—the deeper the tradition, the better the chances for success in the appeal. It is instructive in this respect to compare the social influence of the Protestant ministry, in the abolitionist period, with that of the Marxist professoriate in the 1980s. In pursuing the subject anyway, it will be useful to hold in mind an aphorism by the great art historian Erwin Panofsky, who described a humanist as someone who "rejects authority" but "respects tradition." A troubling fact about the humanities today is that so many on both sides of the argument respect authority but reject tradition.

Teaching Culture

The crisis affects the humanities most of all because traditions are made from books. That does not mean a set list of great books. Few institutions have ever adhered to a single such list for more than a generation. And yet, educated Americans tend to feel that there are good books that students ought to know—a reason for universities to exist is that you read

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the books there, and learn to think about them. Maybe the books have gone on being taught in some measure from sheer habit. But it is a good habit. Such was the common perception of the humanities around the end of the Second World War; and on the whole the picture was right in its mingled sense of purpose and routine. About the structure of the humanities in 1989, the same educated Americans are apt to have a much less confident picture. But they seem to feel sure of this much: that in the humanities generally, and in literature departments above all, strong arguments have been mounted against teaching many of the old books. The habit of teaching them still survives because the numbers (of teachers, of students) are still on its side. Yet the opposition to such teaching is active and energetic, and it seems to grow stronger as defenses of the remembered routine grow duller.

To say why this should be a cause of anxiety will require a digression on how universities got into the curious business of teaching culture. John Stuart Mill invented the idea of culture in our modern sense when he spoke in his essay on Jeremy Bentham about the good of "self-culture." The essay appeared in 1838. For a long time after, it was assumed that the culture of individuals might be formed without much conscious aid from institutions. Mill, however, had in view a middle-class public so much more conversable than ours that it takes some imagination even to recall the milieu he was working from. When one looks back at Victorian England and the America of Whitman and Lincoln, one is impressed by the consensus a majority of the educated observed in the arts and moral sciences. Not, indeed, a consensus of judgment, but a consensus about the grounds of judgment. That culture had its touchstones—serious monuments, local monuments—many of which have dated badly. But their familiarity was the outcome of shared ideas, of a knowledge of people and things and reputations to be reckoned with (whatever one finally made of them), all to a degree that we are now likely to find incredible. Incredible—and, many would want to add, elitist, exclusive, pernicious. But the first reaction I think is the true one. This was the milieu in which the author of a radical defense of liberty could look forward to seeing his arguments reviewed in *Fraser's Magazine* or the *Athenaeum,* the *Edinburgh* or the *Quarterly Review,* any of a dozen journals neither academic nor popular, which kept a cultural conversation alive.

We live in a different atmosphere, from which the available signs of a public culture have for the most part been withdrawn. The deterioration has sped up noticeably in the last two decades, and the ground note of American culture, as it is experienced by a literate person today, is television—at best the national network news, or some grave and newslike talk show. The news magazines are done in the same style and written by the same people who go on the shows. This change has been quite marked even in an autonomous publication like the *New York Times*, which once seemed a great resource for discussion and information and which cannot trace its decline to any apparent sense of rivalry with television. What there is of a live debate on issues of current importance goes on in journals of opinion like the *New Republic* and the *Nation*. These are run by factions, and their coverage outside politics is limited, but they are the only feature of our landscape that gives a remote idea of the intellectual life that Mill could rely on, when he trusted culture itself to be acquired as "self-culture." Consider, as a symptom of our different milieu, the fact that we have not a single journal that still makes a practice, as the *TLS* does in England, of reviewing a great many new books soon after they appear. What intelligent reviewing we do have occurs sporadically, often in the pages of small academic journals. That means that if works of art or complex argument hold much interest for you—painting or fiction or moral philosophy or political theory—you are thrown back on your own resources to make what selection you can. People in this position tend to look for help.

And, mainly, they look to universities. For it is an unhappy fact that most of the conversation about culture in America now is carried on in universities. Almost alone, they perform the function Mill and his contemporaries supposed no single institution would ever have to perform. No one can quite remember when they assumed this responsibility, but without them certainly nothing else would fill their

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place. They induct students into a life of reading, looking at, and discussing works of the mind. What troubles the pamphlet-writers and letter-writers about the humanities is that this function might, in the not very distant future, be suspended. Not that a disaster is on the point of occurring—but that it might, gradually, occur—because we have forgotten the arguments for preserving a state of things we took for granted. The anxiety I mentioned earlier is thus linked to a particular fear: that we now run the risk of thoughtlessly surrendering, in a piecemeal fashion, an educational practice which in turn strengthens a kind of social coherence we believe to be valuable. The government accuser who frames the matter in this way will receive from the academic comforter a ready reply: "Schools are much the same as they always were—just come and see." But one ought not to forget a third character in this dialogue, who is present at least as an observer—the aggrieved parent who asks (or wonders if it is still permitted to ask), "Why are my son and daughter watching MTV for a class requirement instead of reading Tocqueville on the tyranny of the majority? I think television is a way of death. And what do they mean when they talk about an 'interpellated discursive body hierarchy'? What is going on?"

When a tacit consensus starts to break down, a panic reaction asks, How can we hold on to it? By what rituals of consent or symbolic allegiance can we make it mandatory? But in a free society, tests of adherence or assent are only warranted in a crisis that demands of citizens an intense, complete, reciprocal trust. We are not at a moment like that, and besides education does not feel like that, not even at moments of low self-confidence. In an area where our habits and opinions were never meant to fit us snugly, we ought instead to be asking questions that lead away from tests. How did the older pedagogy lose some of its animating purpose? And what can we do to restore as much of that purpose as is now worth having? A safe consensus cannot be induced by artificial means, in intellectual any more than in moral life. What is sometimes possible, in the intervals of a controversy, is to offer reflection on a change that is already in progress. One thereby improves the odds in favor of reflective change.

The Importance of Being a Science

A curriculum based on certain books is not as silly a therapy as it is often made out to be. Yet such a curriculum is, at most, a therapy. After all, the titles with which we fill our "required" reading lists make only the details of a collective portrait—the sharp outlines of which are decided by a story we want to tell about ourselves as a culture. Logically, this last element in a curriculum comes first, but it may be the hardest of all for us to think about now. A loss of articulate energy and even of demonstrable prudence in our political leaders; a tendency among citizens generally to follow protest, grievance, and other acts of occasional citizenship into the paths of legal redress and not public persuasion—these phenomena are both a cause and a consequence of the growing distrust in America of any common discourse concerning the daily choices of politics and morality. For students now in their teens and early twenties, the genuine struggles of this society, over civil rights in the fifties and sixties, over Vietnam in the late sixties and early seventies, can seem a thing of the past. So too can the very idea of a speaker or writer who addresses a chosen audience. The public discourse now is fashioned by front men and anchor-persons who read expressively from an electric roll of words and address an audience of everyone. The representative figures of the culture are lawyers, especially those paid to plead a cause behind the scenes. Taken together, these developments betray a weakening of the belief that citizenship requires an active competence.

Humanities scholars tend to resist thinking of themselves as exemplars of a meaningful discourse that is missing elsewhere in their culture. They resist from a decent modesty, and perhaps also from a sense of inadequacy. At most, they portray the life they have chosen as an interesting line of work, something intelligent students can "go into" if they care enough. The obvious worldly competition, people also known for their adeptness in the uses of words, consist above all of lawyers and

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journalists, but scholars seldom rank themselves anywhere on this scale. At the same time, they have felt pressed by the usual expectations of the academy itself to identify their work as far as possible with special credentials. This concern has led away from public engagements and into a professional—even, at times, an esoteric—ambition for the refinement of a knowledge all one's own. Professionalization along these lines has been going on for most of the century, and yet here again the last twenty years have seen a remarkable acceleration of the process. It says something about the consequent state of mind that no word in the academic humanities is used more frequently and uncritically with the intent to praise than the word "marginal." We want a new knowledge, and we want a knowledge no one will accuse of pretending to be central. Still, some common belief is needed to enforce agreement and to excite enthusiasm. At present the belief is that the codes of professionalism and its customs at any time are good in themselves, since what one learns by standing outside them is not knowledge. Close up, the tenacity with which the last view seems to be held is conspicuous. It is a kind of staring faith—half cynical, half relieved.

Scholarly discovery in the humanities does now and then produce new knowledge. That is only one of the interesting things it does. It may also (by a fresh arrangement of facts) help to create the intuitions of a whole generation. And it may (by a stroke of interpretative acuteness) serve as a stimulus to further discovery, or as an incitement to thinking. It is true that thinking is an elusive and indeed a nonutilitarian good. Until recently, one could have said that it therefore had a home in the humanities. But an advanced student of literature now who justified a project in this way would risk being sent to the provinces for reeducation. The sudden fortune of *knowledge* as an ideal of the humanities is all the more puzzling when one recalls that ever since the early sixties a majority of scholars in departments of literature have been trained not as historical researchers at all but as critics. Yet for people doing intellectual work, the way to social acceptance in America has always been through imitation of the sciences. By which was meant, originally, the natural sciences.

Here the social sciences were merely the first to go; it has taken some time for the humanities to follow. For the first of these shifts, from the natural to the social sciences, chiefly a methodical language was taken over. In passing from the social sciences to the humanities, only the memories of such a language are needed. A few habits still remain in the way of a clean sweep for "knowledge." You cannot predict the behavior of someone suffering from an anxiety disorder in the same manner that you predict the behavior of a planetary body. It is not clear that you would *want* to read a novel by Flaubert in the same manner that you read a chart of socioeconomic status. Nothing, in either instance, stops us from forcing the transition anyway; or rather, nothing stronger than social and moral conventions: a convention about the difference in character and dignity between astronomical entities and individual persons; a convention about the way to look at works of art, as distinct from other sorts of social documentation. These are, to repeat, only conventions. But they are what we have—nothing better—to tell us how to spend our time well or ill.

An important use of literary theory in the 1970s and 1980s was to ease the rigors of this scene of legitimation-by-knowledge. Once the analogy with science has been accepted, the humanities can move very fast in any direction. For the objects of research here offer a very perfunctory resistance—they have an almost infinite amount of "give." The profile of a voter group, however preposterous its inferences, can in the end be falsified by additional or contradictory evidence, but how can a novel answer back? A concise professionalist thesis in literature departments now runs as follows: "We need to teach not the texts themselves but how we situate ourselves in reference to those texts." (The words are James Kincaid's, but similar formulations can be heard, these days, at almost any session of a professional colloquium on literature.) It is pointless to object that nobody ever taught "the texts themselves," whatever that may mean; rather, teachers conducted a class on a book for the sake of showing a way of thinking and talking

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about books. The point of the statement above is less to argue or persuade than to announce that the subject has been changed. Correctly translated, it means: "We need to teach not interpretation but the sociology of knowledge."

I do not much like the atmosphere or the effects of the professionalist move in literature. But the emphasis on literature in attacks on the humanities seems to me misplaced, and if one allows the blame to fall there, one must do so entirely as a matter of convenience. In fact, what is happening now in literature happened earlier, over a longer period, elsewhere in the humanities. That is why *only* literature departments are relied on to teach a canon of works that have been read for generation after generation. Teaching on this pattern became a marginal option long ago in more thoroughly professionalized fields like philosophy and history. The classic texts out of which those disciplines grew, the disciplines themselves honored by atomization or polite oblivion. It is made out to be a scandal that advanced students in English today may have read only a few plays by Shakespeare. It has been a long time since even the most eminent professional philosophers or historians were expected to have read *all* of Hume or Kant or Thucydides or Gibbon—unless, of course, their particular interests happened to incline them that way. Our crisis, then, feels like a crisis because, by an accident of institutional arrangements, the teaching of humane letters has for some time been entrusted to departments of literature; and now, prominently at a few institutions, literary scholars show signs of wanting to give up their traditional work for novelty and a clear reward. "Don't jump off that cliff!" say a host of concerned citizens, but we know better. There is a warm sea of publications below.

Traditional Past, Professional Present

A definition may now be needed to suggest what the humanities ideally ought to represent. The one I like best was offered by William James in "The Social Value of the College-Bred," a 1907 address to the Radcliffe Alumnae Association.

> You can give humanistic value to almost anything by teaching it historically. Geology, economics, mechanics, are humanities when taught with reference to the successive achievements of the geniuses to which these sciences owe their being. Not taught thus, literature remains grammar, art a catalogue, history a list of dates, and natural science a sheet of formulas and weights and measures.

Thus, according to James, it is the historical approach to events, texts, and persons—telling a story about phenomena otherwise linked only by family resemblance—that turns a field of study into one of the humanities. On his view, the difference between the humanities and other areas of learning is not to be explained by the presence or absence of a method. It has more to do with a choice between interpreting the achievements of the past in a steady relation to the present and digesting the molds of contemporary knowledge with occasional dips into the past for comparison, contrast, and condescension. James's definition also shows why history and philosophy now belong to the humanities only provisionally. They moved away at the bidding of strong internal motives—in history, distrust of the ideal of a single story about a common past; in philosophy, the pressure always to revise the margins of a given problem in response to discoveries in the natural and social sciences. In departments of literature, the pull away from the humanities has had weaker but still sufficient internal motives. Against the critical appreciation of great works, a skeptical pressure has been placed on the words "appreciation" and "great"—the former being put down as the eulogistic name for a blind habit, the latter as a judgment of value that can be altered when and as we please.

Many readers will agree that *none* of these developments has been altogether happy for education. But they will then ask, "What is the alternative to continuous professionalization, and to the usual professional devices for regulating knowledge?" The only possible response has often seemed to be "a genial amateurism"; or "the culture of common sense"; or "just reading for the pleasure of it." These phrases are all in the same style and no one has ever believed that they answered the question. But different answers have also been

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given from time to time. Michael Oakeshott has quoted in this connection a former master of Eton, William Cory, who distinguished the mere acquisition of knowledge from the making of "mental efforts under criticism."

> A certain amount of knowledge you can indeed with average faculties acquire so as to retain; nor need you regret the hours spent on much that is forgotten, for the shadow of lost knowledge at least protects you from many illusions. But you go to a great school not so much for knowledge as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment's notice a new intellectual position, for the art of entering quickly into another person's thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms.

Of the inheritance that is thus passed on to a student, Oakeshott remarks in his essay "Learning and Teaching":

> It does not deliver to us a clear and unambiguous message; it often speaks in riddles; it offers us advice and suggestion, recommendations, aids to reflection, rather than directives. It has been put together not by designers but by men who knew only dimly what they did. It has no meaning as a whole; it cannot be learned or taught in principle, only in detail.

The comments I have cited by James, Cory, and Oakeshott all suggest a nonscientific defense of education. James thought that learning of every kind, which was otherwise just a compound of an age's favorite facts and theories, joined the humanities when it became the subject of a story about the past. Cory and Oakeshott draw some consequences for a liberal education generally. For such an "unrehearsed intellectual adventure" (to borrow Oakeshott's phrase) is constituted by something less than knowledge and something more: the learning of arts and habits. Knowledge, without these, though it may lead to intricate speculation, will never pass into self-knowledge.

But this view only offers a sense of the purpose of education for students. It is a different matter to say how far it might apply to teachers as well. Presumably they have gone to school already, and so are already acquainted with the arts and habits in question. If the things that later interest them are specialized topics of research, why not confine the bulk of their teaching to just such topics? That has long been the model of academic work in the sciences. Until lately, however, it was a model scorned by the humanities—where, from personal interest as much as dedication, many professors often chose to teach outside the area of their current research. But in the last decade literature has taken the path of the rest of the humanities. Even a first-year instructor will now be advised, by the cleverer sort of colleagues, to negotiate as early as possible for a sequence of seminars that follow an intended sequence of publications. Maybe the only good that is lost in the process is a certain ideal of "range." But when that happens, it quietly changes everyone's feeling about the kind of place a university can be.

It would be wrong to draw a nostalgic picture of the general life to which the humanities have lent themselves in earlier periods. The refutation lies in a history of the academy itself: the teaching methods of the old grammar and rhetoric created, for most of two centuries in America, as desolate a waste as a pervasive antiliterary theory of literature may now create again. The story is nicely told in a recent book by Gerald Graff called *Professing Literature*. And on the whole, once the focus has been restricted to the academy alone, it comes to seem a story of continuous improvement in the humanities. But such an account of the curriculum cannot reflect the disparate functions that a given study may have served for the culture of different periods. In the nineteenth century, the academic humanities were chiefly to be relied on for grammar and rhetoric, both "dripped in" to the student's head with a stupendous dullness. Dullness apart, that may have been pretty much what was looked for then. Something wider and deeper is looked for now.

Universities, of course, cannot be held answerable for the defects of a general life they did not make by themselves. The new academic professionalism shows that the schools at this level are just one more casualty of an ethic of market rationalization that controls our society today as never before. And yet,

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precisely if one does look at the whole society with the same degree of realism, one will want to take with some caution the usual advice to follow professional development wherever it leads. Professional development really has no more moral claim on us than real-estate development. The forest is ploughed under to make a dozen shopping malls, for which a corporate agent puts up the first ten million, a neighborhood pays with its life—and now, as the last extortion of victory, a graduate tutor is asked to interpret the original blueprint in class as a paradigm of a "social text." The truth is that with much refinement and convenience, professionalization has brought much damage everywhere. Everywhere: in the medical and legal professions, too; in every discipline the creation of which requires the creation of a new laity. What it has most destroyed in America is our common sense of a public life.

Institutional Radicalism

Professionalism in itself is without charm. Its success as a working doctrine in the humanities owes everything to its alliance with another, and at one time a quite distinct, force. I have in mind a mood of belief that fiction could do more with than polemic can: I will be calling it—with a sense that the phrase somehow fails to be satisfactory—"institutional radicalism." This mood has its own tightly regulated conformities. But I think it is fair to begin by looking at institutional radicalism as a nonconforming reaction—a spirit of partisanship brought in to cure something as virulent on the opposite side. The conservative great-books plans that I mentioned earlier have come to be associated with a design of assuring assent to a political and economic establishment. For the conservatives offer a distinct image of culture. It is a culture in which people can always be trusted to derive much the same truths from the same books—a culture of assent. Let us, for contrast, think of the institutional radicals as people who aim to exemplify an opposite ideal—a culture of suspicion.

Members of the culture of suspicion see through all the possible mystifications of "the given," whether that means a given pattern of interpretation, a familiar social order, or a received habit of distinguishing political education from political recruitment. They know that an unreflective tradition, of the sort the conservatives plead for, is not a medium of thought but rather a lulling therapy for acceptance of things-as-they-are. When they challenge such a therapy, they are apt therefore to appear as the defenders of a liberal freedom of conscience. This posture, however, is a little misleading.

Institutional radicals begin with an uneasy truth: that meanings in any culture are arbitrary—produced, that is to say, by choice and circumstance and the accidents of power. Once those meanings take on the apparent solidity of conventional truths, they serve to keep in place all the hierarchies of social, economic, and sexual subordination. These sound like the kind of data that any reformer would want to use. But here they are used with a disdain for every practicable design of reform. Faced with a choice between the conservative belief that culture is sacred and the liberal belief that it is a common possession of some utility, the truly suspicious reply that it is always partial, always compromised. Or—to adapt the police-blotter slang that has helped to make these discussions sensational—a work of art is *complicit* in crimes it does not confess; accordingly, it must be not interpreted but *interrogated*. I take these words from a recent public lecture in which "literature itself" was said to bear "some of the responsibility" for the inadequacy of the sanitation laws of Victorian England.

There is an intelligible pattern of motives for this moralizing disapproval of literature. The freedom that works of art now enjoy in a few societies was won, with difficulty, as an effect of the triumphs of Renaissance Humanism and the Enlightenment. But the prejudices of institutional radicals tend to be antihumanist and anti-Enlightenment. Combined with a distrust of "the West" (identified with the project of empire) is a distrust of the individual (=capitalism) and of tolerance (=repressive tolerance). Some of these predigested beliefs go back to Fanon and Marcuse. Closer in the foreground is Michel Foucault, used chiefly for words that seem to telegraph a truth about whole epochs ("circulation," "currency," "surveillance") and for the clinical irony of his

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prose in translation. But the scripture of institutional radicalism—a work so available that many readers can accurately reproduce its argument without having read the text—is Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As Horkheimer and Adorno argue there, all Enlightenment knowledge presumes, and believes its own presumption of, impartiality. Yet it does so for the sake of conquering the objects of knowledge (among which are included other people). Everything that comes to light in this way is known in order to be assimilated and therefore exploited by the knower. In the process an alternative or contrary truth is cut off, and the task of theory is to recover what has been lost, by exposing the dead-end of what has been gained. Jürgen Habermas, a responsible and skeptical expositor of the Horkheimer-Adorno thesis, says in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* that the aim of the *Dialectic* is to exhibit the perpetual relapse of enlightenment into myth and that for the authors "the permanent sign of enlightenment is domination over an objectified external nature and a repressed internal nature." Indeed, the adjective most commonly paired with *enlightenment,* by academic writers of this tendency, is *totalitarian*.

It needs to be emphasized that such a use of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* leads to an oddly distorted picture not only of the Enlightenment but of the views on aesthetics that Adorno evolved over a long career of thinking. In *Aesthetic Theory* he writes: "To instrumentalize art is to undercut the opposition art mounts against instrumentalism." He had nothing but contempt for those who sought in art the fluent and translatable meanings of propaganda. But most readers at any time use a body of writing for what they think they will find there, and what literary theorists have been drawn to in Adorno is the part that looks *simply* iconoclastic. Some of the consequences for practical criticism are traced in a recent article by David Norbrook, "Life and Death of Renaissance Man" (*Raritan,* Spring 1989). Norbrook says that once the general reaction against the liberal culture of modernity has been accepted, even the English Revolution

> can be seen as a key moment in the installation of the logocentric, repressive, bourgeois subject [who is] the source of most evils of the contemporary world. Thus Jonathan Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy* . . . sees the Enlightenment one-dimensionally as a fall into essentialism that paved the way for racism, and manages to move in one page from Kant to a Nazi ideologist. For Herman Rapaport, in *Milton and the Postmodern,* Milton's defense of the regicide marks him as a predecessor of Himmler.

Habits of thought like these are now dominant, if not yet exclusive, in two areas of literary study, the Renaissance and American literature. And they bring with them a copious and explicit vocabulary of praise and blame. For blame: "essentialist," "canonical," "thematize," "containment," "ideology." For praise: "decentered," "marginal," "reproblematize," "subversion," "ideology."

The points of accord I have listed above are negative and minimal—necessary and not sufficient elements of an orthodoxy that may never crystallize. But together they give a distinct tone to current reflections on the function of literary scholarship. It is a tone that connects a left-wing antihumanist like Fredric Jameson with a right-wing pragmatist like Stanley Fish, and in turn connects both with a utilitarian relativist like Barbara Herrnstein Smith. In all these writers, though in each for different reasons, the liberal idea that knowledge is a cosmopolitan good has been displaced by the professional idea that knowledge is an institutional good. Not the free discourse of equals, they say, but the licensed discourse of peers, creates the conditions for an advance in knowledge. And what is true of knowledge is true of thought itself. This last deduction has acquired such currency that it can be stated flatly as an axiom: "Professionalization makes thought possible," write the authors of a recent pamphlet, *Speaking for the Humanities* (ACLS Occasional Paper, No. 7). Are there also some kinds of thought that it makes impossible?

With statements like this, one feels that the circle, not only of worldly advancement, but of mental life itself, has been prematurely closed from within. A step further along the same path lies the proposition I heard advanced, without irony, at a recent symposium on the humanities: "There are no ideas except in institutions." If,

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then, a scholar (say, an intellectual historian in a department of social historians) should leave her institution but go on writing books, she would be doing something in those books, but we could no longer say that she was having ideas. It is an odd and unhappy terminus for thought to arrive at. Combine, now, these typical "inside" statements with the rarer "outside" statement I quoted at the start—"Professors should have less freedom of expression than writers and artists, because professors are supposed to be creating a better community"—and it will be plain how the anti-elitist humanities elite could come to be oppressive in some of its daily effects. But how did things ever reach this point?

Aesthetics = Politics

There used to be a morality of scholarship that warned the interpreter, or commentator, or historian (all of whom were pictured as impartial) never to seek through scholarship to influence the world outside of educational institutions. I do not accept this morality—it is hard to see how it could be lived. But it was an understandable product of liberal self-confidence a generation ago, of pluralism in politics and positivism in science. As illusions go, it was not a bad one. Maybe it helped to induce a degree of conscious fair-mindedness even in scholars who knew exactly where they stood at the beginning of a plan of research. A longer scanning of the evidence for conflicting testimony, a greater reluctance to impute low motives to scholarly or political antagonists: these, at least, are imaginable effects of such a belief. With the unmasking of the disinterested ideal, which many humanities scholars now *assume*, every choice, whether conscious or not, is easily exposed as "implicitly a political choice." Critical practice along these lines follows from a deliberate policy of crude thinking. It also begs a number of questions, as the following parallel assertions may suggest:

(A) Milton was making a political choice when he wrote *Paradise Lost* in a complex idiom that few readers could follow even in 1670.

(B) The professor is making a political choice when he says the good of studying *Paradise Lost* is to expose the elitist pretensions of its author.

Do these two assertions, in fact, describe the same kind of choice?

An institutional radical will want to say that they do. A pretty predictable moralism is at work in assessments like these—a moralism that one naturally associates with active public commitments. But for the last decade or so, the activist tone in scholarship has been found compatible with a restriction of politics to the universities themselves. Indeed, the standard defense of institutional radicalism in the humanities, and increasingly in the study of the law as well, is that scholars can have their deepest influence on public discourse simply by doing what they do anyway. One works in the classroom in the hope of achieving some effect in society; but, by a happy symmetry, the social effects are already there in the classroom; to pass outside it is to risk the strangeness of a new routine, without the promise of any reward. *One must cultivate one's garden.* At no earlier period, perhaps, would this have been taken to mean: "Talk long enough about that flower and you will succeed in changing the plant-structure of the universe."

Of institutional radicalism as a social phenomenon, the only analysis so far has come from neoconservative journalists, in articles for *Commentary* and the *New Criterion*. All the articles agree that the new tendency grew out of sixties radicalism; that what is happening now is the inward migration, on campus, of the leaders and followers of the student revolt; and that the people in question still think the way they always thought—which means that they are a nuisance and ought to be abated. There is a particle of truth in the analysis, the truth of a profile just glimpsed in an unlit room. To see where it goes wrong, one must have spent time lately on the faculty of a college or university, as most of the article writers have not done. It is true some of the sixties people are still around; and true, sometimes now they have tenure. These facts say nothing about how they conduct themselves. There is great variety here, but one may say as a rule that their

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bureaucratic manners are impeccable, while their generosity and opportunism occur in about the conventional mix. So the puzzle remains: Even as the language of academic study has been politicized, politics itself has been coded back into the language of academic study. If I say in a lecture, "The figuration of Prospero's last speech in *The Tempest* betrays a slippage from subversion to containment which the occlusive presence of Caliban tends to undermine," I may, in some fantastic dialogue of the mind, be singing the equivalent of a Sandinista Wedding March, but what it means to you practically is, "Look at a slightly different list of secondary works, this time, and don't turn in the paper late."

Russell Jacoby, in *The Last Intellectuals,* wrote well about the obscurantist habits of institutional radicals, but he saw their predicament as part of a larger story about the vanishing from American culture of the public intellectual. His thesis, I think, explains why a single article of faith from the sixties has passed unchallenged into the eighties—namely, the idea that the university is a microcosm of society. That is why what one does at a university will suffice as a complete account of what one does in society. At times of relative tranquility this means that "the politics of interpretation" can be pursued with only the usual iconoclasm. At times of social unrest it may well mean, as it did in the sixties, that turning the university upside-down looks like an appropriate gesture of solidarity with causes that have nothing to do with education.

One further motive seems to unite the several available versions of institutional radicalism: a belief in the priority, no matter what the context, of the twin ideals of equal representation and universal rights. These are radical aims that many Americans endorse—in politics. Carried into every human practice, they work against a strong principle that says that merit ought to be judged separately in separate spheres. To the institutional radical, however, that kind of separation can only be defended as a tactical move. For culture and politics involve not the moral good of discrete virtues but the fighting of successive battles in a single war: The two activities are infinitely translatable into each other. Suppose, for instance, I want to increase the political representation of some person, or class of persons. I can enter the political fray with congressional representatives, editorial writers, and so on, and try to get some legislation passed. Or I can increase the representation of the same person or class of persons by altering the reading list for a course I teach. That, I will say, changes the "image" of things as much as any political action could—and perhaps more so, because more elusively so.

Thus by a kind of extended pun, the structure of representation in a political order is said to be linked directly with the choice of objects for representation in art. This axiom, commonplace in the humanities today, belongs to a pedantic populism that is more typically found in state-run academies. Every such academy beginning with France in the eighteenth century has enforced a criterion of value based on subject matter and appropriate "treatment." The situation is not the same yet in American universities. But principles are seldom invoked that could stand in the way of just this drift toward conformity. A polite silence is the rule here, and that is a pity, for the pedantic-populist view of culture forgets an important fact. Literature owes what prestige it still commands to the idea that it is a sphere where influence cannot be bought, or leveraged, wheedled or bullied for, in quite the same way it can in politics through the machinations of skillful lobbyists. Doubtless this idea is to some extent an idealization—even in the heyday of romantic and modern art, it was partly that—but we hold on to different words for culture and politics because the idea has continued to serve a human need. Now, if the lobbying for representation in culture ever reached a pitch where it was clear what was happening, at that point all the advantages of iconoclasm would have been played out, for culture would have been emptied of its prestige. We could then cut back to a regimen of politics that needed no translation, and have one fewer set of virtues to worry about.

And yet the current plea for a supervised culture rests on evidence open to doubt. The truth is that nobody knows, or ever has known, how works of art dispose us to act. All we can reasonably be sure of is that they do have some

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effect: It would be odd if one part of human life were alone exempt from such hazards. What to make of this possibly fortunate and possibly appalling fact remains a matter to be settled by convention. The belief of the suspicious, that culture has a pervasive influence in politics and so ought to be thoroughly translated into politics, is as defensible as my belief that its influence is nothing like pervasive and that to pretend otherwise only leads to coarse sloganeering. In making some estimate of the risk on both sides, democratic principles have not till lately been at a loss. They permit no test of right representation in a work of art, any more than of right perspective in a licensed interpreter. They allow the possibility that we may even build up minds so free as to cherish, for generation after generation, some books more than others, without from that long experiment catching the taint of a superstitious reverence. Is there a social cost or a social benefit in keeping the experiment going? Probably something of both, and we will never have the instruments to measure them.

But the argument is likely never to come to a head. No matter what their program, the adepts of institutional politics seldom encounter members of the general public which they have written off. In consequence they are poorly placed to know how their opinions sound to many of the people who might read, or hear, or even be affected by them. It will be instructive therefore to look at a rare occasion when institutional radicalism—or, as it is sometimes called, the "oppositional practices" of a profession—did briefly and memorably come face to face with public opinion. The academic in this case was Robert Bork, a professional man of the *right*—a different type from the scholars I describe here, on the face of things. Yet the logic of his position was the same as theirs. I believe the defeat of Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court—not only that it was accomplished, but the way it was accomplished—was one of the most hopeful events in our recent politics. And how did we do it? By affirming a certain traditional interpretation (as it happened, the liberal interpretation, which in civil rights has become traditional) of the impact of modern history on public life. Against this, Bork's main defense rested on the assumption that his offensive views belonged merely to oppositional practices within an academic profession. His explanation, had it been accepted, would have cleared him from the kind of scrutiny by the representatives of a common tradition to which he was in fact exposed. I select the example to make a point about the drawbacks of institutional radicalism generally, without respect to party. Some time in the future, the judicial nominees who try to explain away their opinions with just this logic may turn out to be members of the legal-academic left. If the defense they give is as evasive, and the public sentiment against it as strong, as happened in the case of Bork, then those nominees too will deserve to be defeated.

The Drift Toward Mass Culture

The last two sections have been a necessary excursus; it is time now to return to the practical issues they point to. For the foregoing remarks could hardly claim much interest if the new movements had not produced a striking change in the shape of literature departments. Some main innovations are:

- The teaching of a canon of great books as one continuous record of deception and betrayal; literature, so to speak, with a minus sign in front of it.
- The teaching of alternative canons in black studies, feminism, and other subjects.
- The teaching of literary theory for an up-to-date access both to the great-books canon and alternative canons.
- The teaching of mass culture (including television sitcoms and shoot-em-ups, *USA Today*, "Postmodern Standup Comics," and so on).

These enterprises look like an odd assortment, and it might be supposed that they would not have much to say to each other. Nothing, for example, about the perspective of alternative-canon teaching should make it in the smallest way sympathetic to the concerns of anti-canon teaching, and it is possible to admire much of the work done in the first area and none in the second. Yet hardly a single telling criticism has been ventured by any of these tendencies against the interests of any other. However

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vastly the character and justification of the enterprises may differ, their practitioners appear to feel that they must stand or fall together.

I think this feeling is mistaken. But it has led to occasional displays of unity, and on an interesting front: the worth of teaching mass culture. If enough people want to slow down the trend, maybe it can still be done. Not merely an initiative but an argument will have to be challenged here. Anti-aesthetic theory can prove very handily that there is no intrinsic difference between high art and mass art: the only difference that counts has to do with habits of interest and perception. Grown-ups, including many grown-up students, are likely not to want to allow television-for-credit in universities. But until that preference is widely known, professionalists in the humanities will, as far as possible, take the high democratic ground and identify mass culture with popular consciousness. The confusion of "mass" with "popular," and of "popular" with "democratic," shows a decay of the social sense of scholars that it would take another essay to explore. It is as if Colonel Sanders, because his products are consumed by millions, were to be treated as an authentic representative of southern military folk cuisine, and as if to question his practice by cooking something better or going to a real restaurant were the expression of an anti-democratic elitism. Yet counterarguments will scarcely make much headway where a professional convenience is at stake. High theory, in the humanities, *needs* mass culture to test its concepts on, just as a scientist needs a control condition in an experiment.

The current defenses of mass culture are in no way novel, and when a surer consensus prevailed they were simply beside the point. For a long time, television was refused a place in literature departments—not because of a metaphysical belief in its rottenness but from a general agreement that its goods were inferior. By contrast, the practice of teaching it now, and so giving students in the classroom more of what they can find outside, has acquired a shock value that is hard to top. The gesture makes a direct score against the older democratic belief in the liberating uses of culture. And it does so quickly, familiarly, without apology or explanation, as only a gesture can. If, in fact, as the culture of suspicion asserts, the Enlightenment did not enlighten, if the liberal idea of tradition was always and only a mask for oppression, and if, in the invention of an aesthetic sphere a little apart from science and politics, the Enlightenment and modern liberalism together must be judged a cheat and a swindle, then the kind of interest we have come to associate with works of art is only the result of a single long unhonorable error. Then, too, the best way to overcome the aesthetic prejudice against mere packaging will be by teaching in a solemn spirit works of commerce that profess to be nothing but packaging.

It is, on the face of it, a creed of social despair. Still, a leading precept of liberal education holds that no subject in itself is low, and none is ruled out in advance as a basis from which genuine learning might start. That must be true of television, at least as a potential subject. The question is how, and where, to approach the thing intelligently. To study it in a language that matters, you need some knowledge of how the shows are "created," streamlined, and sold; of the corporation executives, advertising agencies, and on-the-scene liaison personnel who sell the audience to the sponsors; of the influence of marketing, and of production constraints, on many details of the final package, such as the timing of plot climaxes for commercial breaks; and so on, far into the domain of economics and sociology and behavior modification—assuming all the while a fair acquaintance with statistical analysis and the newer techniques of audience demographics. Having equipped yourself in this way, you may eventually be in a position to work for a profit in television; you will at any rate be well situated to unmask its products, if you have a taste for doing so. None of this knowledge is at home in the humanities, and no one yet has offered to transport it there.

There is an irony in the recent professionalist effort to legitimate television that can hardly be savored too much. For the products of television are themselves produced by a market culture far more debased and far more powerful than the bookish tradition that some academics hope by this alliance to destroy. Nowhere do we see the face of that culture more in the real

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glare of its mastery than in a political year like 1988. It was the last step of a long downward path when George Bush (or was it Michael Dukakis?) quoted the Chevrolet motto "the heartbeat of America" without quotation marks, to evoke all the pathos he could find in an idea of public service. It was part of the same step when Dukakis (or was it Bush?) quoted the network Olympics logo "Go for the gold," in answer to a question about economic policy. All this the culture of suspicion has taken in, and wants to teach, and wants students to consume, more and more. To what end? Perhaps that of some day evolving a wholly negative "knowledge." But a cynical assumption as well appears to play its part here. Television has the perfect charm to suit a style of affectless dandyism that now flourishes among the prospering intelligentsia of the West. It is the thing you can always be "with," without being of it. Mixed in with the other motives of the style may be a touch of envy for those whose suspicion has climbed to the higher stage of unqualified cynicism—those who work in the industry of television itself, yet reserve the right to say how little they are of it.

When I first heard a theorist praise the militant intertextuality of a soap commercial, I thought that to have made the ad was the next best thing to interpreting it. Or was it just the next, better thing? That was the year before the humanities conference about television at Johns Hopkins University, to which some of the show-makers themselves came to answer their (quite sympathetic) explicators. A professor who went said afterwards, "The industry people were really very nice." Well, the industry people *would* be nice. Occasions like this give them some free advertising and add to their products a gloss of respectability that even the most whimsical sponsor cannot bank on. There is not, yet, at a major institution, a Don Johnson Professor of Lifestyle. But if the endowment were offered to a state-of-the-art program in theory and communications, it is hard to see what standard anyone would cite for turning it down.

But that is to project rather freely from current tendencies. And one should not underrate the element of costume here, or the extravagant tokens of normal insincerity. At the convention of the Modern Language Association last December in New Orleans, the undeclared general theme was mass culture, as applied anachronistically to any place or period covered by the curriculum of scholarship. The intertextual soap crowd and the anonymous ballad crowd got together and theoretically serious exchanges abounded on such topics at the Marriott and the Hilton. But on the Friday afternoon when the convention began to thin and was replaced at the same hotels by the bigger, rowdier, and (I think it fair to say) more popular clientele of a football weekend, it was not clear, from the results of one informal canvass anyway, how many of the Association's avant-garde could name even one of the teams in the Sugar Bowl. The populist affectations of a teacher at any level make for benign entertainment. But the effects are never edifying, and the public in a democracy has a natural interest in those effects.

Teach the Conflicts?

I believe in any case that discussions about the humanities ought to be widened to include people outside both the culture of assent and the culture of suspicion. It is too important a matter to be handed over exclusively to far-right journalists and hard-left professors of literature. At present, the curious airlessness of the debate is typified by a trimming proposal that has just emerged from a group of moderate, humane, and thoroughly optimistic professionalists. Gerald Graff, in the book I mentioned earlier, together with Jonathan Culler, Catharine Stimpson, and a number of others argue that universities can best adjust the innovations of research to the older habits of pedagogy by teaching the curriculum-controversy itself. This certainly looks like the path of least resistance and will therefore recommend itself to many university administrations. Also, it implies a high-minded estimate of undergraduate students, as of their peaceably arguing professors—a flattering picture all around until you think about it. But what can it mean, for the most gifted student imaginable, to "learn the conflicts"?

The timely books and articles that take a

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position on the conflicts are not built to last; there will be another debate, with different books and articles, for the early 1990s and for the late. Where a pedagogy like this *has* been tried, in the more arid tracts of the social sciences, it cuts down the generations of students to blocks of five or six years, and one generation is reduced to talk with the last about the fraying ends of a half-dead quarrel. It is true such a proposal envisions a student generous enough and inquisitive enough to thrive in any atmosphere. But suppose we imagine a student more remarkable still: one who sees just how far his or her teachers stand for unharmonizing points of view, who even takes pleasure in arranging mental wars between them (in which, perhaps, some perish forever) but who, far from wanting such an exchange to be formalized in every class, thinks of education as something more than a professional debate. This student will already have read some works of history and philosophy and fiction that prompted a fresh kind of thinking about life: one reason that he, or she, went on in school and took the humanities instead of the sciences was to think about books like that in a more organized way. By the proposal we are now considering, such a student is sold short.

In sum, one cannot help feeling that the teach-the-conflict idea is a device of convenience worked out for scholars themselves, to give a live constituency to talk that would otherwise be muffled in the iron lung of subsidized quarterlies. Things are bad, yes; the talk has become tedious and fractious; but not so bad, yet, as to warrant an expedient like this. Besides, there is in fact a line of recent inquiry in the humanities, or rather a convergence of interests, from which a curriculum might be built up to serve the education of students. I have in mind the growing agreement that historically important books ought to be read across genres, even when that means passing across the boundaries of departments. For example, it should be possible to read *Leviathan* and *Paradise Lost* in the same class, just as they were once read by the same culture, without having to be taught by a scholar who makes up in a hand-to-mouth fashion a whole history of poetry or of political theory. The odd thing is that such an experience is not now broadly possible.

Here again one may blame the lapse in some measure on the effects of rapid professionalization: on the one hand, a loss of confidence, in areas where some real competence might still be fostered; on the other hand, a tremendous widening of scope in areas where no departmental talent can serve as a guide. These difficulties are now being felt above all in departments of literature. And yet the difficulties themselves suggest a shared belief that books talk to each other in subtler ways than the existing map of the departments can reflect. Everyone hears scraps of this conversation, but it is hard to find the teacher, in a single body anyway, who can keep up with what books of such different sorts are saying. I do not think the solution lies in bending to the fast answers supplied by the avant-garde in a given department—answers that, as I have argued, tend even in the short run to be parochial and in the long run both antitraditional and authoritarian. It may lie rather in creating a permanent place for collaborative teaching in the humanities. To be well sustained, teaching on this pattern requires that the collaborators come to know texts that feel initially strange to their understandings. In doing so they may be reminded, not of the sense in which their students are protoprofessionals, but of the sense in which they themselves continue to be students.

There exists now at many institutions, though in an unorganized way, a community that might some day give a vivid character to teaching and research along these lines. It does not usually occur as a group with a fixed place of residence, for its interests do not correspond to the chosen emphasis of a single department anywhere. But it has a clear identity; and it has a history. A generation ago some classics of historical narrative, which a new-modeled discipline had pushed to the side (Hume, Carlyle, Macaulay), were found to be leading a second life in English departments. It was a half-way solution, but it did allow some fresh scholarship, and it kept something good alive. The same sort of adaptation is now occurring across a wider range of subjects and with more regular support. The history of philosophy at a

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number of schools has partly migrated into departments of religion, and moral philosophy is often at the center of the curriculum in departments of politics and law schools. It seems very probable that if, in keeping with the same pattern, departments of literature ever decide in earnest to unload their great books, somebody else with different motives will want to take them up. It would be a fine stroke of poetic justice if the next generation of philosophers elected not to read a word more on "weakness of the will" from professionals until they had consulted several thousand pages of Tolstoy, George Eliot, and Henry James.

Conversation and the Survival of the Past

I have mentioned the worth of a community that may exist in no special *place*. For the argument I began with, it seems worthwhile to add that this is a community that exists at no special *time*. It can be a liberating discovery to feel that there are thoughts one has in common with people who lived and worked, acted and suffered a long time in the past. Indeed, many of the strongest feelings of solidarity for a thinking person are likely to be of this kind. Such "elective affinities" are interesting in themselves but they serve a deeper purpose of scholarship. To believe on reasonable grounds that in a given cause, though one may have few living allies and perhaps no visible ones, somebody in a similar predicament once felt the same intuition, can be a sustaining knowledge and the beginning of a persuasive self-trust. There are, that is to say, kinds of discovery foreign to one's contemporaries, knowledge that neither a sect nor a school professes, which one can feel called upon to bring to light alone. And the only way will sometimes be through a personal reading of the past. Dependence and group-narcissism are the paralysis of genuine scholarship; but scholars, like citizens, to whom that seems a healthy state of things will always invoke *the argument of growing solitude*. "A cold look," as Nietzsche describes it, "a sneer on the face of those among whom and for whom one has been educated is feared even by the strongest. What is it that they are really afraid of? Growing solitude! This is the argument that rebuts even the best arguments for a person or cause." Maybe the only aim that Nietzsche ever had in common with John Stuart Mill was to disarm of its sting the "argument of growing solitude." Nietzsche's reason was a distrust of the herd, Mill's reason a trust that it would not stay a herd forever, provided all thinking did not come to be identified with the conventions of a certain time and place.

Professional institutions are defined from within by their socializing codes. Traditions are made of something more. They offer, in fact, a kind of solitude, and a kind of company. The unity one looks for in a tradition is the loose fitting together of lots of facts, stories, and the shadows of strong impressions. Of course the more adhesive unities are good for something; they must be, or so many people would not cling to them; but they cannot grow and they cannot change. What remains perplexing about their appeal is that the wish for permanent stability and the fear of an endless panic should so often be joined in a single mentality. The culture of assent and the culture of suspicion have done well at least in reminding us that America is all one society and that a deep sickness somewhere will eventually be felt, though under a different name, everywhere. We have our *academic* junk-bond dealers, perpetual negotiators, inside traders sailing close to the wind in several markets at once; we may, just now, be entering the era of the hired raider, and the leveraged buyout of whole departments. The crisis of the humanities is an episode in the internal development of an area of study. But it is also part of the history of America in the 1980s.

This essay itself has been a casualty of the very institutional parochialism that it describes. I have written steadily of "the humanities," and yet I write as a teacher of literature. The mood of a related discipline like art history is so different that the same generalizations hardly seem to apply. Or anyway, not yet: the literary humanities embody large numbers, they command many journals, fellowships, and institutes for advanced study, and a volatile tendency is always more likely to spread than an inert condition is to stay inert. Anyway the

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calm and imperturbable voices here, who say that changes have always happened, that things will shake themselves again into an accustomed shape, miss the whole point that their overexcited neighbors have somehow grasped. Culture does relate to society, after all: to say more would be portentous, to say less merely false. Some time ago the universities took on the work of showing by example what the connection might be, and how the connection might vary from person to person. They are now some way down the road to putting aside that work; which is why people worry about the humanities. The mistake of the professionalists, I said at the start, has been to exalt knowledge-as-such at the expense of arts and habits. Yet knowledge, the knowledge of the sciences, if it adds nothing worthwhile to human conduct, still gives us the mixed benefit of progress. What do arts and habits give us?

A provisional answer is that the benefit here relates to the ideal of an open, informed, and reflective discourse. It was in deference to some such ideal that a few modern philosophers—among them R.G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History,* Michael Oakeshott in *Rationalism in Politics,* and Richard Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*—came to think of inquiry in the humanities on the analogy of "conversation." Why conversation?—as opposed to, say, contest, or market, or stockpile? Conversation is the right metaphor because it marks an event, in time, that had a beginning and perhaps will have an end, though no one afterwards will remember just how either occurred, or why. Conversation, because each speaker frames a statement in the belief that someone listening is capable of a reply. Because all of the speakers have an interest in common that none can easily describe. And because the good of conversation is not truth, or right, or anything else that may come out at the end of it, but the activity itself in its constant relation to life. Though the subject changes and the participants do too, the sense persists that a certain place is there for belief and doubt, and this somehow keeps smaller projects going forward, with a sureness more utilitarian enterprises give as a forfeit to more immediate ends.

Above all, conversation offers a place for coming to know something quite different from what one had known before. This may mean a different way of living, of thinking, of being. But for a citizen of modern America, the largest, almost the only unimaginable difference, is between the new which we inhabit and the old which we have never seen enough of to forget. It is because the distance between our lives and those of the past seems to be so commanding a fact—greater than the difference that separates us from any alien culture today—that I have kept coming back to the arts and habits associated with the study of the past. I quoted earlier a passage from William James's "The Social Value of the College-Bred," in which all the humanities were praised as modes of history. The rest of the same thought in James's lecture says briefly what I have tried to say at length.

> The sifting of human creations!—nothing less than this is what we ought to mean by the humanities. . . . Studying in this way, we learn what types of activity have stood the test of time; we acquire standards of the excellent and durable. All our arts and sciences and institutions are but so many quests for perfection on the part of men; and when we see how diverse the types of excellence may be, how various the tests, how flexible the adaptations, we gain a richer sense of what the terms "better" and "worse" may signify in general. Our critical sensibilities grow both more acute and less fanatical. We sympathize with men's mistakes even in the act of penetrating them; we feel the pathos of lost causes and misguided epochs even while we applaud what overcame them.

If one asks what it would feel like, in practice, to respect tradition even while rejecting authority, these words offer a vivid clue. □

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Jeremy Larner

TAKE ME TO YOUR COMIC BOOK

By the time you read this, Time Inc. will have bought up Warner Bros., or Paramount will have taken over Time, or perhaps both Warner's and Time. The stockholders with the right information will have their windfall, some executives will be drifting in golden parachutes, some assets will be sold or looted, and a huge new media conglomerate will be saddled with a debt structure that makes it even more imperative to invest in high-concept, mass-cult products that can be spun off into syndicated consumer goods.

Meanwhile, the kind of art once intended to heighten the problematic sense of what it means to be human—to stir comic recognition, to purge pity and fear—is going to have a harder time getting out there. But this will be no problem for the commentary industry, which will continue to debase the vocabulary of feeling by applying it to works of concocted gimmickry.

Consider the possibilities for mass market control when a conglomerate like Time Inc. (magazines, educational publishing, cable television) merges with Warner's (movies, tape library, paperback publishing). A cultural product can be novelized, developed for film and television, taped, albumized, T-shirted—and more ominously—featured, reviewed and canonized—all under coordination of employees who work for the same company. Is this what is meant by "the free market"?

In some ultimate corner where I burn the candles of my faith, I don't believe American culture can succumb to complete control. There will always be works of wildness, originality, refinement, and rebellion that will hit the streets in undiluted form before they can be merchandised. There will always be popular critics unaffected by the space for which they are purchased or the inside contacts who attempt to prime them.

Yet consider the pressures on the average media outlet providing "coverage" for a film. Reporters and reviewers will be given parties, previews, and fictionalized bios. A twenty-minute feature on the glorious making of the movie will be provided to every television station. Pretaped interviews are also included in a kit for television and newspapers. Those who manage public figures grant a personal audience most readily to accomplished fawners like Barbara Walters, certain to accept the celebrity's self-description. When the subject has power, the reporter who steps out of his assigned role is shut out or treated with contempt—as George Bush was successfully coached to handle Dan Rather when Rather asked about the documents linking Bush to Oliver North and the *contras*.

Despite the rare exposé, or the elephantine pseudo-psychologizing of the Gail Sheehy/Janet Malcolm school, the "profiles" in most slick magazines are jazzed-up puff pieces based on orchestrated access to celebrities scheduled for hotness. Not long ago *Vanity Fair* ran a cover photo of Kevin Costner, just as the movie *Field of Dreams* was released in the theaters. Since *Vogue*, too, competed for that tie-in cover, Costner was given contractual approval of the photographer and the writer who wrote about him. It wasn't even necessary for the magazine to be owned by the film company—but Time's new *Entertainment Weekly* (due in February) will be able to select material from Warner's (or Paramount's) PR kit as fast as it is put together.

Given this media/sales apparatus consolidating itself into ever more inclusive structures, given the alienated style and sensibility of the age of late Reaganism, what more viable communications product than a comic book? In comic book style, the most primitive identifications are repackagable as music, writing, film, T-shirts, toys, clothes, software—or even politics—taking advantage of cultural technology with a minimum of problematic content. Or, to turn it inside out: artists, producers, politicians, religious leaders, and all who need public support had best take lessons to make themselves and what they do comic-bookable.

One might, in fact, see the culture of the country

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as an array of comic books, filling the racks of an endless supermarket, offering hi-tech simplicities of heroism and horror, fame and fortune, Ramboism triumphant, outrageous pop rock novelty. One can rent a pile of images for the weekend, run them past the whole family, and exchange them for others on Monday morning. What is harder is to leave the store.

A Look at *Batman*

Which brings me to *Batman*, Warner's current record setter. (Only during the reign of Reagan did newspapers begin to print the rank of movies and records based on dollar volume week by week. Next will be gross totals including dolls, caps, and bumper stickers.)

Excuse me for not offering a not only serious but profoundly serious analysis of comics as Art, or a memoir of the superhero fantasies of my childhood. Other thinkers have taken up that slack. I note only my belief that *Batman*, like most other romances, could make a fine and funny movie.

It is, in fact, a funny movie, at least at first, when it deals with the transformation of Batman's arch-enemy, The Joker, from a nasty crook to a ludicrously vicious maniac. No one could be better than Jack Nicholson when it comes to having a ball with perversion and murder. The trouble with the movie as comedy is one that Nicholson has encountered before—when a character starts out at the highest pitch of lunacy, there's nowhere to go. The Joker never tops his first big murder, where he gleefully prances around Jack Palance, firing behind his back and under his arm. After that, the story takes him from one lame device to another, as he tries to capture Kim Basinger and the audience knows full well the lady will—with obtuse slowness—recognize that Michael Keaton is Batman only in the last possible moment of his saving her.

But the Batman/Joker showdown is anticlimactic, since it fails to top an attenuated series of special effects, about which there is no reason to care. O God of Movies, save us from one more Spielbergian cliff-hanger, where feet go up stairwells and heroes fall over ledges, only to catch themselves and get their fingers stamped on!

Nor can one get involved in the love story, since the sexy Miss Basinger suffers from an unfortunate inability to change expression. Even the touted "expressionist" backdrops, which give an amusing view of Gotham as a cancerously polluted postmodern hive, are fully displayed early on and only repeat themselves. For the pleasures one gets from comedy, or from farcical exaggeration, a half hour of *Batman* is better than the whole thing, and not worth standing in line for.

Clearly, those who get psyched for *Batman* are in search of other pleasures. The audience on opening night was composed of people under thirty-five—the target group—most of them college age or younger. The punk hairdos and facial mutilations of a few years ago have largely disappeared; the boys wear medium-short hair suitable for corporate employment and most of the girls cut their tresses at shoulder-length and frost them blonde, with hedges of roots showing through. These young people wore neat black clothes with labels on the outside or costumes based on the Batman strip. Their most thrilling moments came when the Batman logo or the Batmobile were shown upon the screen. The crowd screamed in bliss, like robot consumers reaching their programmed voltage peak.

Do the Right Thing

Now I come to a movie the media instruct me to take seriously, because it is written and directed by an independent young artist who has something to say about race in America. But for this viewer, *Do the Right Thing* is another species of comic book, mostly an entertaining one but not worth the deadly polemics that only contribute to its advertised self-importance.

Spike Lee's freshness and wit lie in his playfulness, his gently humorous depictions of the struggle for wild personal style in the black urban ghetto. The self-conscious originality of the rap, the walk, and the look is a comic subject that transcends race and class. In his first picture, *She's Gotta Have It*, Lee himself steals the show as a cheerfully narcissistic bike fanatic who wears his name in big metal letters around his chest and begs for love in a nonstop whine: "Please baby please baby please baby please!" In one of his daring digressions, Lee strings together hilarious close-ups in which a parade of self-intoxicated men delivers the special lines with which they think to devastate women.

What was dull about *She's Gotta Have It* was the "she" of the title, whose motives for rotating three lovers were never clear or interesting or part of a story that amounted to more than a peg for high-spirited jive. The film-cult praise for Lee's low-budget shot in the dark has evidently led him to take his serious side seriously, and that's a serious mistake.

I think Spike Lee (for the moment, at least) belongs to a long line of American directors who want to eat their cake and have it, too. For most of its footage, *Do The Right Thing* is a romp in the

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sentimental, sunny-side-of-the-street tradition of proud, comic, and idiosyncratic poor people. It takes place on a block of Bedford-Stuyvesant where the walls are covered with fresh red paint, and there is no crime, no drugs, no violence, no guns. The style is more like a play (say, *Our Town*) than a movie, with an array of characters posed in static set pieces delivering monologues or working through long conversations that depend on verbal effects. The pleasure of the film lies in its stagy brashness—its mouthing-off teenagers, say, or the chorus of three middle-aged men who sit drinking on the corner doing the dozens and downing the world in graphic, drastic irony. The picture is not realistic; it's a musical without singers, resembling *West Side Story*—and like that model, it falls flat when it insists on a moral.

Most of the time, Spike Lee tells a vaudeville fable, in which his highly stylized Brooklyn block reflects the world outside in startling, touching artificial light. But at the end, he makes the film itself claim direct reality—as if he has switched to postwar Italian realism and will now expose the sources of racism and violence.

The trouble is, I hardly believe a moment of it. When I thought belief was suspended, I could enjoy the scenes that worked for me. But when the movie sets about truth-telling, it takes on an edge of glib posturing.

Spike Lee has said that to point out the lack of drugs and crime on his fictive block is racist, since such omissions are not noted in white movies. Fair enough when the movie proceeds like a fable. But when Lee's dialogue and camera attempt to supply the nitty gritty of ghetto streets, the lack of menace leaves his rendition laughable. At one point a white man drives a Caddy convertible with the top down past an open hydrant, and stops to scold black teenagers for getting his car wet.

Once again, Lee has trouble with his central character, only this time the actor is himself. Mookie is a small, skinny pizza deliverer who rambles when he walks like Steppin Fetchit. Yet he speaks with somber seriousness, reminds blacks and whites alike of their duties, and is treated most of the time as a moral authority. Mookie is criticized only by his sister and his foul-mouthed Puerto Rican girlfriend, the mother of his small son, who complains that he rarely sees her. Mookie sneaks away to make love with her, but it's not clear how he feels about her or his son. He gazes coolly upon the world, strolls at his own pace, elaborately greets his friends and takes his pleasure, but how he perceives his own situation, we don't know.

Meanwhile a stagy and repetitive conflict is building up between an Italian-American pizzeria owner, who means well toward blacks and is proud of seeing black children "grow up on my pizza," and his older son, bullying and bigoted, who wants to sell the store because he thinks they don't belong there—an idea the movie ironically validates.

The snapping point involves Radio Raheem, a giant youth whose life is spent carrying an enormous boom-box through the streets. At one point Raheem encounters some hostile Puerto Rican teenagers who object to his music. The conflict is resolved when Raheem is able to turn up his volume higher than theirs. As he strides away, a little black boy charges after Raheem to slap hands. A warm, amusing scene—though unbelievable. How does Lee mean us to take it?

Lee is trying to work in quite another style at a tense moment when Raheem enters the pizzeria with his boom-box blasting. As if he has never encountered this problem in his twenty-five years on the block, the Italian owner asserts his authority by smashing the radio with a baseball bat. Raheem then lunges across the counter, movie-Western-style, to throttle him. They thrash around and fall through the door into the street, barroom style. Black teenagers and the two Italian sons pile on, but no weapons are in sight. Two white cops come, pull Raheem off in a choke-hold, and one of them strangles him to death.

Now I don't doubt that police have needlessly killed ghetto youths, I just can't believe the scene in which this is made to happen. It is a key moment, obviously, for just then the quiet Mookie, who has up till now tried to be a peacemaker, picks up a garbage can, somberly crosses the street and throws it through the store's window, causing the pizza parlor to be wrecked, looted, and burned.

What meaning could be intended here, other than that the Italian, though he tried to be good, could not avoid being implicated in a racist killing, and therefore Mookie "did the right thing"?

Why it was right, or what it will mean to the black youth of America, most of whom will probably see this picture, I don't know. There may be a hint of Lee's intentions in a conversation where he admonishes the Italian to say "Minister Farrakhan," instead of "Farrakhan." But a summary like this slights Lee's generally lively, sympathetic talent. I'd give him the benefit of his age, and say that he has a good eye, good ear, and, for now, a poor mind.

I have a harsher opinion of those who rationalize the silly stuff by saying blacks, like whites, are entitled to their own mythology. Isn't that a cliché of condescension? If we deplore slick and easy Hollywood violence, we have to regret the studied melodrama of Lee's climax.

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As the picture ends, Lee floats quotes from Martin Luther King—for nonviolent resistance—and Malcolm X—for violence in self-defense—across the screen. As it happens, King's quotation is eloquent, and Malcolm's (out of context) unobjectionable, but if a movie hangs together and speaks for itself, it doesn't need abstract quotes.

Never mind that Spike Lee is the latest director to be publicized as a fearless *auteur*. For a more accurate and morally complex and even funnier version of urban streets, I prefer the best episodes of the television series, *Hill Street Blues*.

And if you're looking for depth, truth, and power among the wretched of the earth, go see the Indian movie *Salaam Bambay*. It occurred to me afterwards that *Salaam Bambay* has its own dramatic conventions, and does not even show the poorest of India's poor. But while you're watching it, best beloved, every moment rings true, and you do not think of brilliant directors, camera angles, other movies, or the words in magazines.

The Flag

I said earlier that politics could be repackaged as comic books, too. Just as Batman fights the forces of darkness, or Clint Eastwood snarls the code words for might makes right, so did Ronald Reagan reduce the world to a perverse and righteous cartoon. Reagan showed—though he was not the first to show it—that if virtue could be staged and scripted, ignorance, indifference, thievery, and repression could be ignored. Now we have a national competition among politicians to see who can pose himself as a comic book hero—a modest, decent guy like Bruce Wayne capable of transforming himself into Batman, the relentless defender of victims and virgins.

George Bush lacks Reagan's acting ability, but he has thrown himself into the role with boyish abandon. The Bush push for new constitutional amendments is a comic book masterpiece. Standing like Citizen Kane against a massive blow-up of the Iwo Jima photograph, he kicks off a drive to make burning the American flag illegal. Posing with religious zealots, he supports the outlawing of a woman's right to have an abortion.

In these scenes, Bush is not unlike Batman getting into his car, or Spike Lee, thoughtfully picking up a trash can, crossing the street, and throwing it through a plate glass window. *There! That will set these matters straight.*

The state legislatures cannot possibly process the new Bush amendments by 1992. But no matter, he will have at least his burning flag issue on which to stage another comic book presidential campaign. He won't have to think about, speak about, or even see the forces that create a block of Bedford-Stuyvesant. □

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Robert Heilbroner

A VISION OF SOCIALISM

SOCIALISM: PAST AND FUTURE, by Michael Harrington. New York: Arcade Publishing Co. (Little, Brown and Company), 1989. 300 pp. $19.95.

"Socialism," writes Michael Harrington, "is the hope for human freedom and justice under the unprecedented conditions of life that humanity will face in the twenty-first century. Socialism?" he asks in the same breath: "How can a nostalgic irrelevance be the precondition of anything?"

That poignant question, posed on its initial page, is the central focus of *Socialism: Past and Future*. As the title suggests, the book presents a wide-ranging overview of the evolution of the socialist idea, from its early Utopian yearnings to its present confused condition. The Stalinist nightmare aside, it is a story of gradual deterioration from an activist social movement to a debating society. Harrington tells how Rudolf Hilferding, the brilliant Marxist theoretician of the 1920s, advised the German trade-union movement that it was fruitless to seek relief from the Depression: "Depressions result from the anarchy of the capitalist system. Either they come to an end or they must lead to the collapse of the system"—an analysis that was a recipe for passivity and defeat. By 1969 the organizers of the Socialist International in England had to telex to London for the words of "The Internationale," because too few delegates any longer remembered them.

But the importance of Harrington's book does not lie in its review of the past, by turn compassionate and scathing. It lies in a running debate between an outspoken endorsement of socialism as the vehicle for humankind's hope and a candid admission that the socialist idea today carries a heavy "baggage of historic failure." At a time when self-styled "socialist" governments are the targets of a repudiation and delegitimization without precedent in history, such a debate has more than passing significance. No one is better suited to conduct it than Harrington, who has fought many battles and weathered many disappointments in the cause of democratic socialism. That the debate remains inconclusive, despite Harrington's engaged advocacy, strikes me as a strength, not a weakness, of the book, and as a testimony to the honesty of its author.

Harrington's case for socialism, like all political arguments, is ultimately a plea for a set of values, but it is a plea based on premises about the nature of modern day society. Thus it begins with explicit "hypotheses" that set the stage for the argument to come. I propose to scrutinize them to see whether they lead in the direction that Harrington suggests.

The first hypothesis is that "the fate of human freedom and justice depends upon social and economic structures." The premise, which seems innocuous enough, actually begs the question that freedom and justice rest on aspects of human society to which socialism has always directed its attention, rather than on aspects about which it has nothing to say, such as religious fundamentalism, mass hysterias, and the like. Nonetheless, it is difficult to think systematically about the future from some starting point other than Harrington's. Wild cards may upset the socioeconomic logics on which the left has always built its theories, but these logics are, nonetheless, the only ones we have. Let us therefore pursue the debate from Harrington's point of view.

Harrington's second hypothesis comes in two parts. The first is that we are living through a protracted revolution that he calls "socialization." As the author puts it, "Socialization, in one form or another, is the imperative of every society in the late twentieth century. . .; the fate of the entire world in the twenty-first century." Although it is a key term, this imperative is not an altogether clear concept. I take it to mean a general tendency for society to become more organized, in the sense of being subordinated to impersonal forces, particularly of an economic kind.

As before, one can pick away at the premise. Some observers would point toward individualization, not socialization, as a dominant aspect of modern history. Indeed, from Adam Smith's time on observers have worried over the manner in which

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society would achieve coherence and cohesion in the absence of the unifying pressures of religion or tradition. Smith revealed the market to be a source of economic order, but he never suggested that it could provide political or social orderliness. Thus one way of reading the underlying tendency of modern history is to see it as a process of desocialization in which the extension of the market disintegrates older social bonds.

Once again, however, I register this caveat to head off the opposition rather than to dismiss Harrington's argument. For the disintegrating force of individualism can also be folded into Harrington's hypothesis as to the socialization of everyday existence. The resolution lies in the two-sided aspect of the market—at one and the same time the chief means for the vast multiplication of individual life-choices and the chief source of pressures and constraints, no less powerful than religion or tradition for being much more invisible and incomprehensible. Because Harrington is trying to think through the prospects for socialism over a future in which capitalist dynamics—inflations and stagnations, interpenetrations of economies, disruptions of technologies—will dominate economic life, I think he is justified in placing "socialization" in the forefront of the tendencies against which, or with which, socialism will have to contend.

That brings us, however, to the second, and much more contentious part of Harrington's premise. This refers to two quite different ways in which socialization can become manifest: "Under capitalism, [as] a trend toward a growing centralization and planning . . . [that] takes place *from the top down*; under socialism, [as a] process *subjected to democratic control from below by the people and their communities*" [his italics]. From here it is but a short step to the conclusion that under capitalism the process of socialization will "subvert the possibilities of freedom and justice that capitalism did so much—however reluctantly—to foster"; whereas under socialism there can be a "genuine socialization" that will prevent the process from ministering to the requirements of capitalist elites and open it to the needs of the majority of citizens.

Here the objection that must spring to everyone's mind is that "socialist" governments have been one of the principal sources of oppression and injustice over the last half century. This raises the crucial point that socialization need not serve only the interests of dominant economic elites but can also cater to those of political elites, hardly supportive of the proposition that socialism will be a means of rescuing humanity from socialization "from above."

Harrington is painfully aware of this objection—after all, it constitutes the "baggage of historic failure" against which his argument must contend. But he has an answer for it. It is that these repressive governments are not socialist, whatever they may call themselves. "The means of production are indeed nationalized," he writes, "but the people have no control over the economy they theoretically own . . . I call this system bureaucratic collectivism and argue that it is neither capitalist nor socialist." In a footnote on the Soviet Union he calls communism "an antisocialist system of bureaucratic collectivism" and declares that he does not see its history as part of the socialist tradition.

Skeptics will pounce on this definitional rescue of socialism as evidence that Harrington has failed to recognize a fatal linkage between socialism, in whatever guise, and the tendency to create structures of dictatorial power. But once more, I would not be too hasty. Harrington does not close his eyes to the abominations inflicted in the name of socialism in the past, but passes over them in the same manner, and for the same reasons, that an advocate of the Christian ethic as a model for social reform would pass over its ugly periods of intolerance and forget about the hecatombs slaughtered in its name. I can think of a very important reason why the relation between socialism and oppression should be warily considered—I will deal with it shortly—but none why the two should be judged as irremediably conjoined, just as I can think of good reasons to presume that capitalism is intrinsically biased against equality but no reason to think it intrinsically connected with fascism or apartheid.

"Well, then, what *is* socialism?" asks Harrington. The answer emerges rather piecemeal from his pages. Although he does not say it in so many words, his argument seems to lead to the conclusion that socialism—the "new socialism" for which he is arguing—is not a form of government, but a *movement* within government. It is a movement whose energies and purposes are to replace governance by invisible and incomprehensible forces with the conscious responsibility of citizens over the direction of their own public lives.

This is, of course, very different from the traditional notions that Harrington has explored in his overview of the idea of socialism. The "new" socialism is not going to take the form of a storming of the barricades by a united working class, because the modern working class, "broken up in small units, spread out throughout the society, and engaged in simplistic, and sometimes isolated, tasks . . . often seems much less impelled to trade-union and political action than the old."

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Socialism is also not going to be mass nationalization of industry—although some nationalization, such as power grids, may be required—because nationalization in itself is only another form of top-down command, the very thing that the new socialism is against. Nor can socialism be reduced merely to some ideal mixture of planning and markets, for however necessary for greasing the wheels of economic life, markets, like nationalization, can be no more than a means to an end. "The phrase 'market socialism,' " Harrington writes, ". . . implies that what *defines* socialism is the market relation, which is a contradiction in terms."

What we are left with is a series of exhortations as to the directions in which pressure must be applied if socialization is to respond to the needs of those at the bottom rather than those at the top. Not surprisingly, argument now gives way to values, and values become vague and moralistic. . . . "Human beings [must] creatively participate in economic decisions. . . . Socialists [must] synthesize their long run transformations of the way people work and live with short run responses to serious economic and social disturbances. . . . The new socialism must be concerned with the character of civilization, not just with the allocation of investment. . . . The 'decommodification' of life is a critical aim of the new socialism. . . . Socialism will have to become international as never before."

It is easy to smile at these (and many other such) homilies as constituting little more than an exercise in social piety. Let me, for example, contrast it with another vision of socialism, advanced by Paul Sweezy, the dean of American Marxian theorists:

> Socialism is now perceived by most people who call themselves socialists as removing the worst excesses of capitalism. That's understandable, but totally wrong in the sense that what is needed is the negation of capitalism, not the removal of its excesses. Excrescences and excesses are not the essence of the environmental degradation here. It's the system itself. You have to have people in charge who care about things other than making profits; and the people implementing the policies have to care too (*Nation*, May 29, 1989, p. 727).

Harrington's socialism is very much of the kind that Sweezy deplores. It is melioristic. It foresees that the socialization process will, for a very long time, be conducted under the directives and within the boundaries of capitalism. It perceives its role as that of influencing capitalist evolution, not as taking over the reins and abruptly changing things.

Moreover, like myself, I think Harrington would be made uneasy by the description of socialism as the "negation" of capitalism. Negations conjure up philosophical absolutes that excuse departures from moral norms. They throw out babies along with their bath waters. Specifically, in the case of capitalism they pay no heed to a structural characteristic of the system that has proved to be the basis of much of the liberties it has developed.

That structural safeguard is the presence within capitalism of a rulership divided between the realm of the economy and that of the state. However much the apparatus of the state is powerfully influenced by the requirements of capital, and to whatever degree the state takes as its normal task the political servicing of the economy, the fact remains that capitalists do not directly wield the powers of war and peace; that bosses cannot imprison or coerce their work forces; and that bureaucrats cannot directly seize the surpluses generated by the economic system. This bifurcation of rights and powers is as unique and constitutive an element of capitalism as is its use of market exchange as the means by which social surplus is put into the hands of its dominant class. Is this remarkable duality of realms to be relinquished as part of the installation of socialism? If so, what is to take its place? If not, what of the "negation" of capitalism?

It is these questions that ask us to pay wary heed lest socialism may too easily incline toward political absolutism. I must quickly add that Harrington is aware of the need to provide refuge against the pressures of control from the bottom as well as from the top. He is hopeful that a "socialist republicanism" may provide the "space for personal and community freedom," but he is careful to be cautious in his hopefulness. "All that we can say with confidence is that if such freedom is to come into existence, it will be the result of new global structures of solidarity and justice. Which is to say, of socialism."

Meanwhile, there is another possibility. I shall illustrate it by comparing conditions in what I have elsewhere called "slightly imaginary Sweden" with the criteria I have culled from Harrington's vision.

I begin with the fact that people in Sweden already participate creatively in economic decisions, both at the factory floor level, and through the extensive and vigorous life that characterizes Swedish politics. I go on to note that the Swedish government also "synthesizes" its long-run transformations with efforts to remedy short-run disturbances, by relocating and retraining populations to avoid economic distress, and by generously subsidizing job mobility through extensive programs of technical or general education. (In passing, I add that nationalized industry plays only a minor role in

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Swedish economic life and is subject to the same trade-union discipline that is exercised within private industry.) I stress the fact that Sweden is a country almost obsessively concerned about its culture and education: indeed, the "Swedish disease" may be said to be a chronic mild moral hypochondria. In addition, Sweden has already "decommodified" important parts of its everyday life by providing heavily subsidized housing facilities for the elderly, excellent day care centers for children, first rate public health facilities for all, and a system of public education that is without equal in the world. Not least, Sweden has led the world in its willingness to transfer capital and human resources to the underdeveloped countries and to serve in the U.N. peace-keeping missions. It has been the conscience of civilized society.

Why is this not socialism? Harrington does not ask the question directly, but I would say it is because Sweden is still unmistakably a capitalist country. Its economic structure is dominated by large corporations, which pursue aggressive policies of economic expansion. It extracts surplus value from its work force (or from foreign workers in its overseas facilities). It legitimates economic flows of income called rents, interest, and profits. It recognizes the "rights" of private ownership of the means of production. It generally ascribes to a value system that we would call "bourgeois."

Thus real Sweden is a capitalist nation in which the objectives of Harrington's new socialism are even now partially in evidence, and judging by past trends, will be considerably further in evidence in the slightly imaginary Sweden of the coming decades. The question, then, is why is socialism necessary? Why is Sweden not enough, at least for those nations, like our own, that are still far from having reached its level?

I think there are two answers to this question. If I may draw my own conclusions from Paul Sweezy's writings, his answer would be that socialism must occupy as distinctive a space in history as its predecessor, and we must therefore expect it to differ from capitalism at least as deeply as capitalism differs from feudalism. Perhaps a social order can move by increments from one configuration to another profoundly different one, but the prospects for such an evolutionary transition are not good, above all under the forced draft of the socialization process of the twenty-first century. Reform is of course desirable but it has its limits. Socialism, if it comes, will likely be the child of stagnation and dysfunction in the capitalist world, of violence and upheaval in the underdeveloped world.

Harrington's answer goes in a different direction. I do not think he would question Sweezy's prognosis as a realistic outcome—perhaps even the most likely among many imaginable ones. But he does not see it as the only outcome. To Harrington, the force that has pushed Sweden into its partial acceptance of control from below has been the idea of socialism, and his faith in socialism derives from the conviction that this force can impart a similar movement elsewhere. As to how far the movement can go, or what specific obstacles it will encounter in different countries, Harrington is agnostic. Nonetheless, with all the provisos and crossed fingers that anyone could invoke, he proposes the belief that a gradualist movement from one social order to another profoundly different one is possible. Perhaps the unprecedented changes taking place today within the "socialist" nations hold out hope that this optimism is warranted. Perhaps that hope will be dashed tomorrow. We simply do not know.

I think we do know that socialism today, at least in the West, must be a movement and not a specific social structure. As a movement, its immediate future probably lies along the general compass settings that Harrington has sketched out. Perhaps the journey may end in a world that negates our own in ways that we would not wish. Alas, that unpleasant prospect may come to pass, whether we support socialist values or capitalist ones, if the process of socialization continues apace, or if history plays the wild cards it flashes from time to time. Such reflections give us powerful reasons to remember that as long as we strive for the ideals of justice and freedom, as we conceive of them, there will be a need for protection against forces from below as well as from above. Harrington makes it very clear that socialism is a risky enterprise. As he points out, however, there is no safe one. □

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Philip Kasinitz

APPROACHES TO THE HOMELESS

NOWHERE TO GO: THE ODYSSEY OF THE HOMELESS MENTALLY ILL, by E. Fuller Torrey. New York: Harper and Row, 1988. 256 pp.

RACHEL AND HER CHILDREN: HOMELESS FAMILIES IN AMERICA, by Jonathan Kozol. New York: Crown, 1988. 261 pp.

THE INVISIBLE HOMELESS: A NEW URBAN ECOLOGY, by Richard H. Ropers. New York: Insight Books, 1988. 242 pp.

It is sobering to read the entry on "homelessness" in the 1968 edition of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* which declares that although wandering men can be found in many societies, "homeless women and children are relatively rare. Their appearance denotes widespread disorder and instability such as follows famines and civil wars." Clearly something of major consequence has happened during the intervening twenty years.

One recent attempt to understand this is E. Fuller Torrey's history of the deinstitutionalization movement in American mental health care, *Nowhere to Go*. In examining postwar public policy towards the chronically mentally ill, who, he estimates, constitute about one-third of the homeless population, Torrey implicitly attacks the usefulness of talking about "homelessness" per se. The lack of housing, he maintains, is only the most visible of the many cruelties suffered when these troubled people were dumped into unwilling communities.

The deinstitutionalization undertaken by the mental health establishment is a fascinating piece of history. There are ten times as many psychiatrists and psychologists in the United States today as in 1945 and twenty-seven times as many psychiatric social workers. Yet the seriously mentally ill, Torrey argues, receive less attention and treatment. Mental health professionals, he insists, have increasingly turned their backs on the seriously mentally disabled and instead sought to bring the benefits of psychotherapy to the mildly neurotic, those whom Torrey terms the "worried well."

At the same time mental hospitals have come under increasing attack. During the early 1960s psychiatrist Thomas Szaz gained a wide audience for the idea that mental illness was a "myth," while Erving Goffman's influential *Asylums* argued that the behavior of mental patients was often an adjustment to the conditions of the institution. In sociology, labeling theorists argued against the stigmatization of deviant behavior and, in a classic case of an insight run amok, bureaucrats quickly jumped on the bandwagon, in part because minimal intervention strategies meant lighter work loads. These sentiments were echoed in popular books like Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and films like *King of Hearts*. The mentally ill were portrayed as free spirits resisting middle-class conformity, or as beautiful innocents with a simplicity too good for this world.

Thus, as advances in tranquilizers and antipsychotic drugs made outpatient treatment more feasible, a variety of forces inside and outside the medical profession pushed toward deinstitutionalization. By the late 1960s civil libertarians had taken up the defense of the rights of the mentally ill. These "rights" included the right to decline treatment and to refuse medication. The intentions of these advocates were laudable and many of the abuses they sought to stem were real, yet their reliance on litigation as a tool of social policy had its pitfalls. Even undeniably positive court rulings, such as those against overcrowding or understaffing, were subject to routine subversion; it's always cheaper to reduce the number of patients than to hire more staff. Yet often this did not bother the advocates. As a lawyer from the Mental Health Law Project put it in 1974: "They are better off outside. . . . The hospitals are what really do damage to people."

Small wonder then that the number of patients in state mental hospitals plummeted from over a half million in the mid-1950s to slightly over 100,000 today. The hospitals were supposed to be replaced by "community-based" mental health facilities, a notion that epitomizes the confusion of the libertarian and communitarian ideals of the 1960s. The mentally ill had *rights* as individuals, including the right to behave oddly—yet they were to become a community responsibility. But community mental health facilities and the professionals who staffed them generally had other agendas, ranging from social change in the 1960s to self-awareness training in the 1970s. In the resulting shuffle, the deinstitutionalized were often lost.

Torrey is too quick to dismiss these alternative mental health agendas as frivolous. He also overrates the importance of doctors in creating public policy, paying a great deal of attention to disputes within the profession while barely touching on the host of political and economic obstacles faced by the community mental health movement as the 1960s waned. Yet he is right in stating that for the most part community mental health centers did not and could not meet the needs of the seriously

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disabled. However, the real problem with releasing mental patients into the communities during the 1960s and 1970s was that in many poor neighborhoods "the community" itself was rapidly ceasing to exist.

So where did the impoverished mentally ill go? Many found refuge in marginal neighborhoods and single room occupancy hotels (SROs). It was only after these fell prey to gentrification in the late 1970s (long after deinstitutionalization had peaked) that large numbers started to appear on the streets. Yet Torrey considers the changes in the housing market a secondary issue. He does not believe that being homeless substantially worsened the condition of many of these people and he dismisses the idea that being out on the street may actually cause mental instability.

This sheds light on a central weakness in Torrey's book: his dogmatic insistence that physiological causes and only physiological causes of mental illness are worth examining. A nasty recurring theme in *Nowhere to Go* is a diatribe against Freudianism or anything else that suggests connections between environment and mental condition. Torrey's vitriolic attack on his more humanist colleagues (shameless hucksters whose assumptions are based on "no scientific evidence") dulls his otherwise astute discussion of the politics of deinstitutionalization.

Torrey ignores the relationship between deinstitutionalization, mental illness, and poverty. Who after all were most affected by the release of mental patients from state institutions? Their families. Where these families were stable enough to create a structured environment and ensure proper medical care, deinstitutionalization had a chance of success. But when those families were themselves impoverished, it is no wonder that their least able members ended up on the streets.

Ultimately *Nowhere to Go* is an argument for reinstitutionalization. As such it is destined to have little policy impact. Hospitalization is now so expensive that, notwithstanding Mayor Koch's efforts to involuntarily hospitalize a handful of homeless people, mass institutionalization is today no longer an option. Still, Torrey's book is being widely read and discussed. The reason, I suspect, is that his analysis is oddly comforting. He sees the homeless, or at least the one-third of the homeless he discusses, as sick. And while he argues that these sick people have been barbarically treated, he lays the blame on a cadre of lazy professionals and their unwitting civil libertarian allies. Despite its anti-Freudianism, *Nowhere to Go* may serve a very therapeutic function for some readers, allowing them to look at the homeless without guilt.

Torrey's medical approach stands in direct contrast to last year's big book on homelessness, Jonathan Kozol's chilling *Rachel and Her Children*. While Torrey focuses on individuals, Kozol looks at the fastest growing segment of the homeless population: homeless families. Originally published as articles in the *New Yorker*, Kozol's book consists largely of descriptions of people he met at New York's notorious Martinique Hotel. Once the nation's largest "welfare hotel," the Martinique is now closed—no doubt Kozol's book had something to do with that—and the city is ostensibly phasing out hotels for homeless families in favor of semipermanent shelters. Yet the conditions he describes remain common in New York and elsewhere.

And a grim story it is. As a physical entity the Martinique, with its maze of corridors, its rats and peeling paint, its thuggish security force, was depressing enough. Yet what Kozol has managed to capture, as few other writers have, is the despair which grows in such places. We see residents trying to fathom the fact that the city pays thousands of dollars a month to keep their families in the most crowded and dangerous settings, but will not (because of federal regulations) spend a few hundred dollars so they can live in decent apartments. After contemplating a host of such indignities, Kozol comes to the same conclusion they do: that the function of the Martinique is social "discipline," punishment for those who have ended up there, a warning to others.

Not surprisingly, people who stay in the Martinique for any length of time often become depressed. Some turn to drink and drugs. Others become intensely religious. A rare few manage to retain some perspective (and sanity) by becoming politically active. Yet for most, homelessness is a radically individualizing experience. Connections with kin and community are quickly severed. Even the significance of ethnicity begins to wane: white, black, and Hispanic families all seem remarkably similar. "Absolute destitution," writes Kozol, "unlike most other aspects of life in America, is blind to color, race or place of birth."

Thus although Kozol readily admits that many of the people he came to know at the Martinique displayed a variety of pathological traits, he believes that few had these problems "before the sledgehammer of dispossession knocked them flat." Their main problem now is homelessness, which, he insists, "makes healthy people ill, normal people

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clinically depressed and those who may be already unwell a great deal worse." It makes no sense merely to treat these symptoms, Kozol maintains. "The cause of homelessness," he insists, "is a lack of housing." In light of Kozol's examples of slow mental deterioration and social disaffiliation, Torrey's cavalier dismissal of the idea that homelessness may cause mental illness seems simply ignorant. But it also seems clear that many of the people Kozol describes need a good deal more than housing if they are to get back on their feet again.

Kozol is astute on how and why people distance themselves from the homeless—and he will not let us get away with it. By presenting the homeless as people who are, above all, unlucky, he pushes the "but for the grace of God" button, and closes the distance between the reader and the families in Martinique. To his credit, Kozol is also not afraid to present homelessness in starkly moral terms.

Yet this approach has some severe limitations. It requires that the victims of injustice be seen as innocent, long suffering, and generally pitiful. Towards this end, Kozol focuses much of his attention on children. Even the adults he presents, though often dazed and overwhelmed, are seldom bitter. In reducing the story of New York's homeless to the compelling simplicity of a parable, Kozol seems to require that the downtrodden accept their lot with saintly forbearance, the better to shame the rest of us. Thus, while everything Kozol tells us is true, it is not the whole truth. Missing is the anger of the young men and women "aggressively panhandling" on the subway, the violence of the streets, the willingness of some victims to become victimizers.

The other problem with this moral approach is that by reducing the issue to society's cruelty, Kozol ends up asking us all to be kinder and gentler. Kozol is not George Bush; the sincerity of his commitment to the poor is beyond question. Yet his insistence that privileged people should be nicer to those less fortunate may encourage precisely the sort of elite-sponsored volunteerism that Bush would pass off for social policy.

What is missing in *Rachel and Her Children* is a systematic attempt to root the individual tragedies it documents in broader social dislocations. A book that does make this kind of connection is Richard Ropers's *The Invisible Homeless*. Published by a tiny press, this work will not receive anything like the distribution of the Torrey or Kozol books. That is unfortunate. True, *The Invisible Homeless* is not exactly a page turner. It suffers from the usual faults of works written for specialists. Yet the reader willing to slog through a bit of sociologese will be well rewarded.

Ropers provides a useful overview of the history of homelessness in the United States since the Civil War, pointing out the similarities and differences between the new homeless and their predecessors. Against this background he draws a detailed demographic portrait of today's homeless based on both his own survey of over four hundred homeless people in Los Angeles and a review of other studies from around the country. While his results do not differ drastically from the descriptions put forward by advocates for the homeless, Ropers provides a level of quantitative reliability missing in most accounts. This is not the sort of study that anyone is likely to dismiss as "anecdotal."

He reports that the homeless are increasingly members of minority groups and are younger and more often female than previously. That is, they increasingly resemble the rest of the poor. Drug and alcohol use is widespread among them, but only in a minority of cases are these problems so severe that they might be considered a cause of homelessness. (It should be noted, however, that most of Ropers's data were gathered before the crack epidemic had peaked.) As Torrey would predict, about a third of the Los Angeles sample had been hospitalized for a mental health problem (often related to substance abuse). Physical illnesses are also extremely common. Of those on the streets (not in SROs or shelters) 78 percent had no health coverage of any sort.

Ropers argues that while mental health factors are significant in creating and reinforcing the "disaffiliation" that leads some people to end up on the street, the primary causes of mass homelessness are economic. He argues that most homeless people, even after extensive time on the street, are primarily in need of housing and jobs, not therapy. He points specifically to the growing economic isolation of the underclass, a chronic housing shortage, and Reagan-era welfare cuts as among the causes of this crisis. Often seen as a class apart, the homeless are here identified as part of a larger population of ill-housed poor people.

Ropers's research also calls attention to the fact that a growing number of people wander in and out of the shelter system. In addition to families trapped semipermanently in shelters and welfare hotels, a large number of the poor are making occasional use of such facilities. The number of these "hidden homeless," now doubling and tripling up in the nation's slums and public housing projects, probably dwarfs the numbers on the streets at any one time.

Ropers emphasizes the need to increase the

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amount of emergency shelter space. He also recognizes the limitations of such stopgaps and worries that such measures might signal a return to the poorhouse of old. He recommends political efforts, principally litigation and activism by the homeless themselves, as ways of pressuring society to recognize housing, as opposed to mere shelter, as a basic human right.

In estimating the potential clout of the homeless Ropers waxes a bit romantic. Despite his invocation of Piven and Cloward's arguments on the disruptive capacity of the poor, the reader remains unconvinced as to the efficacy of such strategies. True, the politically active among the homeless do help keep the problem in the public eye, and they remind us that homeless people are citizens, not merely clients. Yet there is little to suggest that the homeless are likely candidates for political mobilization.

Most activity on behalf of the homeless in the immediate future is likely to be centered in the courts. It is there that most advances in housing rights have been made during the past decade. It would have been useful, however, if Ropers had turned his analytical skills to the long-run utility of litigation as a tool for social change. While groups such as the Coalition for the Homeless have proved invaluable in the short term, going to court as a way to make social policy has a number of drawbacks, not least the fact that litigation, unlike legislation, does not build political coalitions that can protect gains once they are won.

If we are to move beyond these "finger in the dike" strategies it is imperative that those of us on the left start to think about more long-term solutions. This requires seeing the homeless for who they are: a heterogeneous group that includes many very troubled people with a host of special needs. At the same time we must insist that the problems of the homeless are to a large degree problems of poverty. The current shameful situation cannot be addressed without coming to grips with the problems of the poor as a whole. □

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Todd Gitlin

MUDDLED THOUGHTS

DESTRUCTIVE GENERATION: SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE '60s, by Peter Collier and David Horowitz. New York: Summit Books. 352 pp. $19.95.

> The struggle which the Bolsheviks began more than half a century ago is still in its early stages—indeed, in a sense, is just beginning. . . . The dimension of the struggle, as Lenin and the Bolsheviks so clearly saw, is international: its road is the socialist revolution.
>
> —David Horowitz, *Empire and Revolution*, 1969

> Totalitarianism is the possession of reality by a political Idea—the Idea of the socialist kingdom of heaven on earth, the redemption of humanity by political force. . . . What motivates the Left is the Idea of the future in which everything is changed, everything *transcended*. . . . What motivates the Left is an Idea whose true consciousness is this: *Everything human is alien*.
>
> —David Horowitz, "Letter to a Political Friend," in Collier and Horowitz, *Destructive Generation*, 1989

The point is not that Horowitz thought badly twenty years ago. Nineteen hundred and sixty-nine was a bad year for political sense. I, for example, wrote a favorable review of *Empire and Revolution* in *Ramparts*, the New Left monthly of which Horowitz was an editor. Horowitz assigned me the book and published the review. But I won't blame him for my errors.

My point is rather that the same style of thought that drove the Horowitz book of 1969 drives the juicier, jazzier, nastier Collier-Horowitz book of 1989. The style is fanatical, apocalyptic, harsh, Manichaean, frantic. There are enemies everywhere. "The socialist revolution" is on the march. The world divides niftily between the saved and the unsaved, the blind and the all-seeing. On one side, capitalism. On the other side, communism. Sign up. If you don't, you're fronting for the enemy.

There is no enragé like a revolutionary betrayed. And so the *bête noire* of the Collier and Horowitz of 1989 is the Horowitz of 1969—and of 1973–74, when Horowitz went to the aid of the party that the Idea had evidently chosen to carry out Its labors. This was the Black Panther party.

Here and there in their fragmented diatribe, Collier and Horowitz do succeed in evoking the frequently phantasmagorical political atmosphere of Berkeley, California. The country was tilted, and everything loose rolled to California—there was

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sociological truth in the late sixties wisecrack. Berkeley featured a cut-loose recklessness whose political form on the white left was what later came to be known to its critics as Third Worldism—a fixation on revolutionary white hats placed on nonwhite heads. Victimhood was taken to confer the mantle of revolutionary leadership. The Panthers set themselves up to exploit this indiscriminate fancy—Panther co-founders Huey Newton and Bobby Seale raised the money to buy shotguns by selling copies of Mao's Little Red Book, which they hadn't yet read, on the Berkeley campus—and so did vicious imprisoned desperadoes the likes of George Jackson. But what put the Panthers on the national map was *Ramparts*, the San Francisco-based magazine that Collier worked for starting in 1967 and which Horowitz joined on returning to the United States in January 1968 after four years in England. It was *Ramparts* that promoted paroled rapist Eldridge Cleaver to the status of major writer and sage. The Panthers played white radicals like violins.

By 1973, Cleaver, having fled abroad to avoid criminal charges he later admitted were justified, was raving about Kim Il Sung. A number of Panthers were dead from a combination of their own provocations and police ambushes. Some white radicals in the Bay Area had belatedly disabused themselves of their guilty, gullible, fearful, and finally racist attachments to the Panthers. But not enough. Horowitz, overriding what he calls "surface betrayals of character that provided warnings to others but were dismissed by me as the legacies of an oppression that radical politics would overcome," concluded that the Panthers had gone straight and decided to help them. He convinced a bookkeeper to go to work for them. In 1974, she found out they were cooking their books, and they murdered her.

Collier and Horowitz are right about this much: There is, *among other tendencies* on the left, a need not to know—a refusal to recognize that people declared to be agents of history by some Leninist version of the Marxist metaphysic commit crimes. The crimes have been bloody and frequent enough to require that the metaphysic be given the most withering scrutiny. We have heard enough of the familiar structure of alibi: As some wag once put it about the Stalinist gulag, "It didn't happen, it was necessary, and they're not doing it anymore." There are always people to whom these facts are news, and so careful documentation and analysis are always welcome. Had Collier and Horowitz chosen to give us more in that vein, they would have given us something of great value.

Instead, they start with three chilling cautionary tales and then start ranting. One is the horrifying story of Fay Stender, a white radical lawyer who was shot in 1979 and left paralyzed by a black ex-prisoner who accused her of having "betrayed" George Jackson, whom she had defended. (This is news that even as late as 1981, when the authors first published the Fay Stender story, many in the Bay Area left didn't want to hear.) There follows the go-for-broke sexual nihilism and political insanity of the Weathermen, founded in 1969. There is also the tale of an apolitical black criminal Vietnam vet. If the point is that there is evil in the world, and that some of it is lodged in a black criminal subculture, fine.

But notice: this version of "the sixties" begins circa late 1967 and—like the worst of the late sixties' iconography—walks only on the wild side. In 338 pages, I count a grand total of five (to be generous) that touch on the events of the years between November 1963, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and November 1967, when Huey Newton killed an Oakland policeman. The escalation of a horrendous war, the assassination of Malcolm X, the liberal betrayal and the deepening liberal-radical divide, the growing estrangement of millions of American youth who lacked any tutelage in "the radical Idea"—these things rate barely a mention. No, "the sixties" really begin for Collier and Horowitz *when things get exciting*, when "the radical Idea" sashays into town and buckles on its guns.

Now in principle it is possible to argue that late events condemn early ideas. It is even easier to argue that early events or bad ideas create conditions for later events or worse ideas. Such arguments rage about Lenin and Stalin, for example, and legitimately so. But these arguments cannot be presupposed; they have to be *made*. To comprehend how a potential becomes actual, you have to look at history as it is lived, on the ground—have to turn it over, weigh factors, look at not only ideas but social situations and the whole cultural gestalt of a time. That is not what Collier and Horowitz do. Instead, they grab the reader by the lapels and start yelling.

Their cartoon view of "the sixties" comes in part (but only in part) from their lofty vantage point. In the view from Collier and Horowitz, the New Left consisted of Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, Bob Scheer, Noam Chomsky (at his worst), Tom Hayden (at his worst), this reviewer, the Weathermen, Ron Dellums, and a few other names—well, that *is* what the world looked like from the *Ramparts* office, headquarters of radical chic. The civil rights movement barely existed, and no one on the left gets credit for it. (The Martin Luther King whom Collier and Horowitz trot out to discredit black radicals is a

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stick figure—not the King who denounced the Vietnam war and American materialism.) The women's movement is invisible. There was no mass youth upheaval—just "the radical Idea" and its larky high jinks. No one might rationally have concluded that the Saigon government the U.S. installed was a fraud. No one could rationally have concluded that there was no political aim that could justify mass slaughter in Vietnam. Collier writes about his post-Mississippi conversion to antiwar work: "Like others, I passed through the early stages of the foreign policy debate painlessly: It was necessary to support the NLF [Vietnamese National Liberation Front] and work against the U.S." For many others, including this reviewer, the passage through foreign policy positions was not painless, and it didn't settle with quite so much sang froid on the NLF.

"We didn't check facts very energetically," Collier writes of his days at *Ramparts*, "and paranoia and ideology always overcame professional skepticism." When they step away from the Stender and Weatherman stories, professional skepticism is still not doing well under the weight of the *idée fixe*. As they fling accusations around, factual botches abound (for some, see Paul Berman's review in the *New Republic* [April 24], his subsequent exchange with Collier and Horowitz [June 26], Hendrik Hertzberg's review in *Washington Monthly* [May] and his letter in the *New Republic* [July 10]). But you can't make a counterrevolution without breaking eggs, right? The Revolution is Dead, Long Live the Revolution—still absolute, still simple-minded, still global. Parachute tours of the Third World are still available for drop-in (counter)revolutionaries, this time in Nicaragua. Careers are still available in instant expertise. The world is still a faceoff between America and communism, only this time the jerseys have been switched. In this phantasmagorical light, potholes in the Berkeley streets and some other dubious policies are the result of the city government's knack for establishing sister-city arrangements in the Third World. (Let's see, then: How shall we account for potholes in New York? Ed Koch's counterrevolutionary tourism in Nicaragua?) There is no fiscal crisis, no race tension, no bureaucratic blindness.

There is just original sin: insufficient love of America, which seems to mean the American executive branch, especially its most brutal wing. Naiveté, stupidity, ignorance, cowardice, bad ideas, malice, and communism are the same. There is no tragedy, only barbarism, Fifth Columns, left-wing McCarthyism. Ideas they detest are really disease: "In the inchoate attack against authority, we had weakened our culture's immune system, making it vulnerable to opportunistic diseases. The origins of metaphorical epidemics of crime and drugs could be traced to the Sixties, as could literal ones such as AIDS." People caught "moral scurvy." Christopher Hitchens is guilty of "moral epilepsy." "The war lowered our resistance to the intellectual toxins in the air." Their motto might as well be: *Everything hideous comes from aliens.*

The American situation today deserves the overworked word "crisis." Poverty and wealth grow, race festers, cities rot. In racial, abortion, and other decisions, the Supreme Court turns the screw toward cultural civil war. Never mind that the cold war is clearly superannuated, both political parties refuse to whisper the secret aloud. America since the sixties is a disappointment, to put it mildly. Some of what is wrong arguably has roots in the sixties. So this is a particularly opportune, indeed necessary time to think carefully about what the sixties and the left were good and bad for. Instead, bellowing as if they were the only veterans of the sixties to wrestle with the meaning of the revolutionary idea or socialism or the United States, Collier and Horowitz give second thoughts a bad name. □

Gerda Lerner

Women's History

A HISTORY OF THEIR OWN: WOMEN IN EUROPE FROM PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT, by Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, vol. I and vol. II. Vol. I, 591 pp., vol. II, 572 pp. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

The authors of these important and informative volumes, Bonnie S. Anderson, a historian at Brooklyn College, and Judith P. Zinsser, a member of the humanities department of the United Nations International School, came to their task because of the disparity between their traditional training in European history, which omitted the history and activities of women, and their own growing knowledge of women's history. They decided to synthesize recent scholarship in women's history in order "to counter the subtly denigrating myth that women either 'have no history' or have achieved little worthy of inclusion in the historical record. . . ."

They have succeeded admirably. Their book is interesting and well-based in representative scholarship in European women's history. It is an excellent introduction to the subject of European women's

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history. While offering a broad overview, the authors also stress a few major themes, such as class differences, women's power and influence, and women's struggle against misogyny. Last, but by no means least, they introduce the reader to a fascinating array of individual women, some well-known, but mostly not, whom anyone would find worth knowing.

The broad thematic approach is particularly appropriate for dealing with groups of women who are not easily accessible through traditional sources. The description of "The Constants of the Peasant Woman's World: The Ninth to the Twentieth Centuries" is remarkably vivid, precise, and imaginatively reconstructed from historical, artistic, literary, folkloristic, and demographic evidence. The authors accomplish the difficult feat of reconstructing the past experiences of anonymous, often illiterate women, without portraying them merely as passive victims of circumstances. The peasant women of this account have dignity; they take pride in their work, their children, and their own contributions to family and community. The social historics of "Women of the Castles and Manors," "Women of the Salons and Parlors," and "Women of the Cities" are equally well done. Each describes women's physical setting, their work, their familial and property relations, and their ideas and intellectual strivings. We learn the exact composition of some fifteenth-century dowries in Avignon. We are told the impressive yet heartbreaking life stories of famous French courtesans in the eighteenth century and are introduced to the new opportunities and limitations under which nineteenth- and twentieth-century women struggled for education and self-support.

We empathize with the learned Renaissance women, forced to give up their sexual and familial role in order to pursue their learning. The voices of common women speak strongly and unforgettably, such as the testimony of eleven-year-old Eliza Coats, who told an English parliamentary commission in 1842 that she and her brother pushed carts loaded with coal in the mines. "It tires me a great deal, and tires my back and arms, . . . I can't read; I have never been to school. . . . I have had no shoes to go in to school. . . . I think God made the world, but I don't know where God is. I never heard of Jesus Christ."

The organization of this book departs deliberately from traditional historical patterns. The authors explain their conceptual framework in the introduction: Their central thesis is that "gender has been the most important factor in shaping the lives of European women. . . . While differences of historical era, class, and nationality have significance for women, they are outweighed by the similarities decreed by gender. [It] gives a basic commonality to the lives of all European women." Further, "until very recently all women were defined by their relationship to men." Most women have lived their lives as members of a male-dominated family and have been responsible for childrearing and household maintenance. Women's work, whether inside the home or outside of it, has been undervalued. Most women have always had to work at other than domestic chores; the double burden "of caring for family and home and earning additional incomes has characterized the lives of most European women and differentiated them from men." Finally, the misogynist tradition, which denies women's full humanity, reappears "in every era and every European nation. . . . These negative cultural traditions have proven the most powerful and the most resistant to change."

These observations have been widely accepted by historians in the field, although many of them would include in the list of women's commodities the universal feature of control of women's sexuality and reproduction by men. In omitting this, Anderson and Zinsser follow a tradition that deals with sexuality and reproduction mostly from the demographic perspective. The more radical feminist analysis, which sees the question of sexual control by men over women as a central aspect of women's historic situation, in my opinion offers a richer and more complex perspective. But that is a matter of the authors' philosophy on which reasonable people could well disagree.

Starting from a conceptual framework that is representative of current scholarship in women's history, Anderson and Zinsser go considerably further: They conclude that the similarities of women's condition based on gender are greater than the distinctions between women based on class, nation, or historical era. This theoretical approach leads them to the novel organization of these two volumes. They tell the story of European women as an entity, not divided or significantly affected by nationality. And taking off from Joan Kelly's insightful remark that "one of the tasks of women's history is to call into question accepted schemes of periodization," they threw periodization out altogether, except for major periods such as the Middle Ages, the world from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and the modern world. Instead, they tell the story of women by concentrating on women's functions within European society. The result of this approach is ambiguous.

It is arresting, certainly, and forces our attention

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away from the traditional framework of patriarchal history, which is all to the good. It places women at the center of inquiry. I am well aware of the advantages of this approach, because I organized a collection of women's history documents in this way, disregarding chronology and emphasizing aspects of the female experience as organizing principles. In the late 1970s, this approach was innovative and called attention to the continuities in the female experience, such as the sameness of housework and domestic work over several centuries. It also made the self-perceptions of women the focus of attention, especially since most of the documents in the collection were first-person accounts. These advantages still operate; but this organization is not as appropriate to a narrative history spanning more than a millennium and encompassing several national entities. The authors' disregard for national entities has the effect of emphasizing similarities while disregarding differences. This may seem to bear out the authors' thesis, but it does so at the cost of distorting the historical evidence by ommission. For example, industrialization proceeded quite differently in various continental countries and in England. Yet in this account it appears that for women the process and the outcome were everywhere the same. In fact the enactment of labor-protective and mother-protective legislation varied greatly in different countries, as did the specific ways in which welfare-state legislation addressed the needs of women. This kind of specificity is lost through over-generalization.

Interestingly, the way this book is organized has the effect of contradicting the authors' thesis in regard to class. As stated above, the accounts of the various groups of women, such as peasants, ladies of the manor, urban workers, and so on, offer a vivid group portrait in which differences by class are dramatically made visible. The overall effect of this organization is to illustrate the importance of class differences among women, something the authors deny in their basic conceptual framework.

The departure from traditional chronology is probably the most problematic aspect of this book; it has the effect of flattening women's history to a degree that distorts its reality.

Women, throughout historical time, have lived in a world dominated by men. They participated in creating that world, maintaining it, transmitting its values to their children, and, within its confines, they bargained for improvements in their own conditions. One can argue, and I think Anderson and Zinsser show convincingly, that women also created what has sometimes been called a "women's culture," an alternative mode of thought and organization, a series of "free spaces" in which women could develop their own way of life and formulate their own vision of society. Such free spaces were often seriously confined by patriarchal constraints, such as the female abbeys and convents of the early Middle Ages, or the female salons of the eighteenth century, which depended for their existence on the salonieres' ability to please the men who supported them. Above all, women have shared in the major transforming events of history, whether they caused them or not, whether they adapted or transformed them. It is this later point that is lacking in the design of this book.

The authors say persuasively, "Traditional approaches to history must be adjusted and augmented to include the female as well as the male." In these volumes they have offered us a somewhat disembodied slice of actual history, the history of women told as though the history of men did not exist. This is a useful counterweight to a centuries-old approach that presents the history of men as if it represented the history of women as well. To say that the "solution" for transforming the historical account so as to include both men and women as principal actors has eluded the authors of this book is not to say that anyone could have done much better, given the present state of scholarship in the field. They have provided us with a thoughtful and carefully selected synthesis that is not only worthwhile in its own right but challenging in the questions it raises and fails to resolve. □

Judith Stein

The Robeson Story

PAUL ROBESON, by Martin Bauml Duberman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. 804 pp. $24.95

Martin Duberman's excellent biography supplies a great deal of new information and insight about a man previously shrouded in myth. What Paul Robeson thought is still elusive—he wrote very little and maintained a "protective secretiveness" that not even his friends could penetrate. But Duberman's sympathetic portrait of the public man facilitates interpretation.

Duberman's book benefits from but shares the limits of recent revisionist work on the Communist party (CP). This history has revealed important truths about the party's American roots—except that in these treatments communism itself tends to

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disappear. Like the new history, this biography shies away from a serious discussion of the CP's or Robeson's politics after World War II. Although Robeson was not a CP member, communism for him was more than the pragmatic choice it was for many blacks. It was also a solution to many of the problems he had faced in his theatrical career.

Initially, Robeson stressed the opportunities, not the obstacles in black life. In 1925 he abandoned the law for the stage. After leading roles in Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings,* he wrote, in conventional American fashion: "I honestly feel that my future depends mostly upon myself." He overcame bigotry through self control, charm, talent, and support from friends and family. The inner costs became visible only later.

In the 1920s artistic achievement as a solvent for racism was a common notion among black intellectuals; but a career in the theater was not a good choice for a black man. A black actor or singer, more than a writer or painter, inevitably clashed with the racism embedded in American culture. Robeson had few roles to play, and he became increasingly frustrated with his work on the stage and then, during the 1930s, in the movies.

Perhaps the instant acclaim he won delayed Robeson's perception of these limits and encouraged him to act and sing without much formal training. The electric responses to his performances were deserved, but one suspects—and there are hints that Robeson sensed this too—that part of his magic for liberal white audiences was his color.

The celebrity world helped his stage career, but ultimately could not share Robeson's racial agenda. And the society symbolically defined its limits in 1932 when a white English actress, Yolande Jackson, with whom Robeson had fallen in love, broke off their plans to marry because she was not prepared to oppose her family and culture.

As success failed to remove racial barriers, Robeson exchanged the chimera of elite achievement for the uncorrupted virtues of the folk. He had pioneered in the singing of authentic versions of Negro spirituals in the 1920s. Now, in 1933, rejecting both American and Afro-American culture, he began to study African languages and culture, seeking new anchor in his battle for racial dignity. A year later, he traveled to the Soviet Union.

Robeson's attachment to the Soviet Union was rooted in a growing alienation from the West, a harrowing stop in Nazi Germany, and then a tumultuous welcome in the Soviet Union. Like other blacks, Robeson was impressed by the Soviet respect for the culture of dark-skinned peoples. After a warm welcome from soldiers on the Spanish battlefront, Robeson concluded that communist politics were aiding oppressed peoples throughout the world.

International communism in its Popular Front form suddenly seemed to resolve the dilemmas confronting Robeson—culture, racism, imperialism, and his own career. During World War II Popular Front groups, apparently merging with mainstream American culture, offered Robeson acclaim, an audience, and an opportunity to link his political beliefs to his artistic work.

Changing Communist politics after the war, which Duberman does not discuss adequately, are crucial to an understanding of Robeson's course. The party's sharp turn to the left, the replacement of Earl Browder as leader by William Foster, the decision to attack the NAACP and CIO, heralded a new orientation. Then, in 1948, the party plunged into the Progressive campaign to elect Henry Wallace.

Ultraleftism and the decidedly nonrevolutionary Wallace campaign formed a disastrous combination. It broke the party's links to others on the left, making the CP more vulnerable to government repression. After the Wallace defeat, the party went through its own internal witchhunt. The impact on Robeson was devastating.

Robeson had thrown himself wholeheartedly into the Wallace campaign. His sectarian polemics—announcing, for example, that Trotskyists did not merit civil liberties—suggest that he had assimilated the CP outlook. And perhaps the heated party rhetoric provided an outlet for his internal rage, which he had always kept contained.

Robeson paid a huge price in the aftermath of the Wallace defeat. As a result of a speech he gave in Paris in defense of the Soviet Union, the Justice Department removed his passport in 1949, and soon after he became the victim of a domestic blacklist. This mean-spirited retaliation struck at the vulnerability of an artist dependent upon his audiences. But here Duberman's book falters by portraying Robeson's black critics, such as A. Philip Randolph and Walter White, as mere government hounds chasing a besieged hare. These liberal and socialist blacks had a long and legitimate history of disagreement with the party. As the cold war developed, anticommunism might constrict their own agendas, but their opposition to Robeson cannot be written off simply as accommodation to government pressure.

After the war, black politics had many more outlets than during the early 1930s. One major breakthrough was Randolph's March on Washington Movement in 1941. By 1948 Truman, pushed by progressive forces, became the first president in the twentieth century to endorse a civil rights program.

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This growing black activism had its effect on the CP. Robeson was allied with the party leftists, especially those who wanted more emphasis on racial politics. This position was given a theoretical certification in 1949 when the CP designated the blacks to replace the working class as the "revolutionary vanguard." Robeson was friendly with Revels Cayton and Perry Pettis, black CP leaders who represented the new position, but also with blacks who left the CP to pursue identical politics. Pettis had promoted the party's "white chauvinism" campaign, an internal purge for alleged insults to blacks, which quickly became a weapon used by both blacks and white to obtain power within the party.

The CP could not transform itself from a programmatically united party into one providing space for pluralism on the race issue. It could not keep up with the growing black activism, especially as it attempted to defend itself during the McCarthy period.

Robeson continued to support both the CP and independent black activism. Without some record of Robeson's thinking we cannot know how he evaluated these issues, especially the CP's "white chauvinism" campaign. His catholic friendships indicate that he endorsed both party and independent black activism, while implicitly continuing to uphold the party's leading role on black issues.

Robeson's predicament was enhanced by his firsthand knowledge of Stalinist repression, which troubled him, even though he apparently never discussed it with friends. Soviet acquaintances whose relatives were jailed asked for his help. He himself experienced bouts of gloom and fear when in the Soviet Union. But his loyalty was formed in response to the Soviet Union's role at home and anti-imperialism in Africa. Like his close friend Benjamin Davis, Jr., a member of the CP's ruling body, Robeson attributed the prominence of the black issue in the party to Stalin and the Soviet Union. Davis, a Harvard law school graduate and son of the leading black Republican in Georgia, had become a Communist when there was some truth in that judgment. After the war, he exploited this past in defense of orthodoxy. But while Robeson shared Davis's broad worldview, if not his dogmatic mentality, there was more to his loyalty.

The international platform the party provided Robeson was not easily replaced. As his wife observed, Robeson had a stubborn streak, which precluded giving his enemies satisfaction, especially when they assumed the form of reactionary congressmen like James Eastland and Francis Walter. By now, men like Robeson could scarcely disengage publicly from the Soviet Union and retain their dignity and friends. Most of his friends were now Communists, party sympathizers, and family members. In the abstract, all men have choices. In the real world, previous commitments and current enemies constrain.

The pressures of government harassment, the knowledge of Stalinist purges, the heated party atmosphere, the ruined career, and perhaps a faltering voice all took a toll on his life. His attempted suicides and his illness were the outward signs of deep trouble. How each affliction relates to another remains unanswered by Duberman's biography. But together they register the impact of the changes in the political culture of the late 1940s on one man of notable distinction. □

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On Gene

Editors:

After a rather exhausting day of giving interviews and pressing the flesh, presidential aspirant Eugene McCarthy said good-bye to his two campaign workers and entered the terminal at the Greater Pittsburgh Airport.

A scene from 1968? No, the date was November 2, *1988*. McCarthy, the seventy-two-year-old blast from the past, had just completed a busy day on the stump as the presidential standard-bearer of the tiny Consumer party.

Though most political "experts" had long ago relegated McCarthy to the history books, there he was—"Clean Gene"—winding up his *third* presidential campaign since 1968, a year in which his antiwar candidacy forced a sitting president out of the race and nudged the administration to adopt a more conciliatory position on the Vietnam War.

For Eugene McCarthy, politics is a vocation. He has always shared the Plutarchian view that participation in public life is not some sort of game to be ended at some given point—but, instead, it's a continuing commitment.

Thus, it was a bit surprising that someone as astute as Irving Howe could possibly suggest (*Dissent*, Summer 1989) that McCarthy, after retiring from the U.S. Senate in 1970, essentially "retired from public life."

Nothing could be further from the truth. When McCarthy announced that he wouldn't run for re-election in 1970, he also stated that he felt that he could be more effective working outside the senate chambers—which is precisely what he's been doing for the past eighteen years. It wasn't, McCarthy noted at the time, his service on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that made opposition to the war a major issue in American politics, but his willingness to enter several Democratic primaries in 1968 that made the conflict in Vietnam a central issue. McCarthy alone took the issue directly to the people.

In addition to teaching, lecturing, and writing since leaving the U.S. Senate, McCarthy has also paid more than his fair share of attention to the political life of his country.

In 1982, following a twelve-year absence from public office, McCarthy, with twenty-two years of legislative experience under his belt, tried to regain his old Senate seat—only to be rejected by Minnesota's Democratic Farmer-Labor party (DFL). Apparently, the DFL establishment preferred a politically inexperienced multimillionaire by the name of Mark Dayton, an heir to the Dayton-Hudson retail fortune.

In any case, McCarthy still wasn't about to call it quits.

So last year, the onetime pied piper of American politics, running on a few minor-party labels—including the Consumer and Progressive party tickets—warned his fellow citizens that the United States is quickly becoming "a colony of the world." And unlike either Bush or Dukakis, the old antiwar hero courageously played the role of the messenger of bad news, speaking quietly and intelligently about ways to realistically reduce our national debt and trade deficit, as well as ways to significantly reduce America's military costs.

If only his earlier supporters—those who rallied to his cause back in 1968—were still standing with him.

If only. . . .

DARCY G. RICHARDSON
Melrose Park, Pa.

IRVING HOWE Replies:

Our correspondent is right in saying that Gene McCarthy has—sort of—remained in American politics. Remained as an offbeat figure, sadly ineffectual. After the 1968 primary he enjoyed the loyalty of thousands of young people. Had he stuck it out in the Senate, using that forum to express progressive views, he could have led a valuable popular movement; instead, for reasons hard to grasp or condone, he just quit. And then in 1980 he endorsed Reagan, the most reactionary president in the twentieth century. What possible justification could there be for that? □

Hispanophobia

Editors:

I protest, more in sadness than in anger, the intemperate (and historically inaccurate) characterizations of the Spanish settlers and the Spanish colonial regime made by Tina Rosenberg in her "Will Democracy Come to Chile?" (*Dissent*, Summer 1989).

It is disheartening to read that "the worst pirates and criminals came to the New World" seeking, according to her, gold, and plundering the Indians and misgoverning them to boot. Disheartening, I repeat, because, despite repeated refutations of such assertions about Spanish America by scholars over a century or more, beginning with William H. Prescott, Rosenberg persists in making them. Her apparent Hispanophobia will be offensive to many U.S. Hispanics and Latin Americans, tinged as it is with chauvinism and redolent with that peculiar cultural imperialism that comes so easily to the many Johnny-come-lately reporters who cannot lay their biases aside when writing of Latin America.

J. LEÓN HELGUERA
Nashville, Tenn. □

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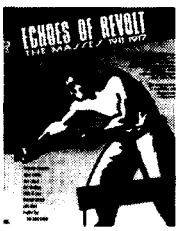

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